



# A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH

BY

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VOLUME II

(THE MODERN COMMONWEALTH)

PART V

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH

(A.D. 1815—1880)

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BOOK IX  
NATIONAL AND IMPERIAL RECONSTRUCTION  
AND THE TRIUMPH OF INDUSTRIALISM  
(A.D. 1815-1852)



## INTRODUCTION

THERE has been no era in the history of the British Commonwealth of deeper significance than the generation after the Napoleonic war, which is surveyed in the following Book. For during that generation the political system of the homeland was recast, the transformation of its social order was carried further by the triumph of industrialism, and a beginning was made in the attempt to regain social health after the terrible dislocation which the industrial change had involved ; while at the same time the organisation of all the great colonies and of India was radically reconstructed, and the relations between the mother-country and the other members of the Commonwealth were wholly changed. It was in this generation that the modern Commonwealth, as we know it to-day, took shape, as a fellowship or partnership of free and self-governing peoples.

Throughout the years when this immense work of reconstruction was being carried on there was a constant fear of revolution in Britain ; and when we realise how dreadful were the conditions which had been produced by the coincidence of an industrial revolution with a long and exacting war, the wonder is, not that there was a danger of revolution, but that the danger did not become a reality.

The danger was averted, however. What averted it was a generous use of the medicine of liberty ; and by the end of the period quiescence and content had been restored. This, indeed, is the outstanding feature of the history of the Commonwealth during this period—a swift expansion of liberty both at the centre and in all the members. And this was what distinguished the history of the Commonwealth from the contemporaneous history of Europe. In Europe, as in Britain, reconstruction had become necessary, and powerful forces making for change were at work. But the medicine to which the monarchs of Europe trusted was forcible repression. The results were, first, that Europe was disturbed by a succession of revolutionary upheavals, progressively more violent, in 1820, in 1830 and in 1848 ; and,

secondly, that Europe saw no such orderly and progressive development as both Britain and her colonies enjoyed. A further result was that an attempt made at the beginning of the period to ensure the permanent maintenance of peace among the European Powers turned out a complete failure. The main reason for this failure was that the League of Peace was turned into a League of Repression. From the moment when this change in its character became apparent (1822) Britain withdrew from the League; and throughout the remainder of the period Britain stood as the diplomatic champion of liberty in Europe.

It was the character and direction of the reconstruction in Britain which determined the character of the development in all the colonies. Their future hung upon the course of events in Britain; and the stages in their development correspond with the stages in the movement of change in Britain. In Britain there was, to begin with, a short period of reaction (1815-22), which never went so far as on the continent of Europe; then followed a period of partial and conservative reform (1822-29); and finally, after the downfall of the Tory oligarchy which had governed Britain since 1784, there began, with the fight for the Reform Bill (1830-32) a prolonged and complex period of legislative activity, which filled the rest of the period, and to which we have given the name of the Liberal Reconstruction. This does not mean that it was exclusively the work of one political party. That was far indeed from being the case; both political parties, and many different schools of thought, contributed to it. But it is rightly described as 'liberal,' because the expansion of liberty was its dominating principle.

In the history of the colonies and of India something like the same stages can be discriminated. There was first a period when no important changes were made. Then came a period of tentative advance, when, for example, the despotic power of the Governors in Australia and South Africa was qualified, and when, in India, the introduction of western education began. Finally, after 1830, a period of great and far-reaching changes opened, and a complete departure was made from the old traditions of British colonial policy. A new attitude of consideration for the backward races appeared. A policy of organised and systematic emigration was undertaken, the results of which were that Australia ceased to be a mere penal settlement, the French lost their preponderance in Canada, and New Zealand became a British colony. At the same time great

advances were made towards responsible self-government in all the colonies save those where backward peoples predominated ; and the last traces of the old commercial monopoly of the mother-country were swept away. At the close of the period it is not too much to say that the British Empire had wholly changed its character. It had been, in the strict sense, an Empire in 1815 ; by 1852 it had become a Commonwealth of free peoples, or was in a fair way towards that goal.



## CHAPTER I

### THE RESETTLEMENT OF EUROPE AND THE ATTEMPT TO ORGANISE PEACE

(A.D. 1815-1830)

#### § 1. *The Reconstruction of the Map of Europe.*

WHEN the diplomats of Europe gathered at Vienna in 1814, after Napoleon's first abdication, and when they resumed their interrupted discussions after Waterloo, they had before them a tremendous task, and a correspondingly great opportunity. They had to reconstruct a dislocated world; and so many ancient landmarks had been swept away by the tempest, that bold schemes of reconstruction were possible. The world expected, and the diplomats themselves hoped, that they would be able to secure permanent peace, and to give some kind of organised expression to the ideal of international solidarity which had been preached by many thinkers during the eighteenth century, from St. Pierre,<sup>1</sup> through Leibniz, Voltaire, and Rousseau, to Kant.

But there were two powerful bodies of ideas of which they would have to take account if their settlement was to have any elements of stability. The spirit of nationalism had grown to great strength during the revolutionary war; it was fermenting actively in Germany and Poland, and more quietly in Italy, in Hungary, in Bohemia, and among the suppressed Christian nationalities of the Balkan Peninsula, notably the Greeks and the Serbs. The liberal ideal also—the desire for individual freedom of action, speech and belief, and the demand for the institutions of self-government—had been implanted in every part of Europe by the fierce apostles of the Revolution. These two bodies of ideas, nationalism and liberalism, were to be the most potent creative and disruptive factors in the life of Europe during the nineteenth century; and unless the settlement could give them some satisfaction, or some freedom of development, there could be little hope that it would supply a basis for lasting peace.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I. p. 670.

The Congress of Vienna, which undertook the immense task of reconstructing Europe after the storm, was beyond comparison the most representative assembly which had ever been gathered in European history, the nearest approach to a complete representation of western civilisation. Every European State save the Turkish Empire had its spokesmen; and round the skirts of the Congress hung a crowd of representatives of the many little principalities which had been displaced during the long wars. But in fact the general sessions of the Congress had little or nothing to say in the settlement. All the operative decisions were made in private conclave by the representatives of the four Great Powers which had played the chief part in the overthrow of Napoleon—Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia; and the dominating personalities of the Congress were the Tsar Alexander of Russia, Metternich the Chancellor of Austria, and Castlereagh the Foreign Secretary of Britain.

The Great Powers were not blind to the importance of nationalist and liberal ideas, but they differed sharply in their views of the way in which they should be treated. The Tsar, though himself a despot with a high sense of his own prerogative, had sentimental leanings towards the ideas of the Revolution; and as early as 1804, when the Third Coalition was being formed, he had contended, in a despatch to Pitt, that Europe would never have stable peace until national sentiments were recognised, and until Governments were brought into accord with the needs of the governed. Alexander won the *sobriquet* of 'the crowned Jacobin'; and in a tepid and wavering way his influence was exercised in favour of a liberal view. On the other hand Metternich, the spokesman of Austria, regarded the nationalist and liberal movements with aversion, as expressions of the revolutionary spirit which had brought so many woes upon Europe. This attitude was natural to the representative of Austria, an empire which included many discordant peoples, and which would be broken into fragments if the nationalist cause should triumph. And because Metternich was resolute and uncompromising, while Alexander's liberalism was only skin-deep, it was the Austrian view which on the whole prevailed. Prussia played the jackal to Russia; her King had vaguely promised a constitution to his people, and vaguely hoped that if Germany were united, Prussia would be the gainer. Britain, as represented by Castlereagh, was not unfavourable to liberalism in moderation: she had, for example, persuaded Sicily to set up a parliamentary

system in 1812. But she desired, more than anything else, settlement and peace ; and, distrusting the ambitious projects of Russia and Prussia, gave her support, on the whole, to Austria.

Thus, though the principles of nationality and liberalism had some influence in shaping the settlement, they were in no sense adopted as its guiding principles. On the other hand, the Great Powers did not definitely adopt the dangerous principle of legitimism, or mere restoration. Though they restored many petty princes in Germany and Italy, and re-established the Bourbons in France, Spain and Naples, they disregarded a multitude of legitimist claims, especially in Germany, which emerged from the settlement divided into thirty-nine States, whereas before the Revolution she had been split into more than three hundred.

There were, in truth, no clear guiding principles in the settlement. On many points the Great Powers were tied by agreements which they had made with one another or with other States during the war. Thus, Russia having conquered Finland from Sweden in 1808, and being unwilling to restore it, some compensation had to be offered to Sweden as the price of her participation in the final attack on Napoleon. She was promised Norway, which had been attached to Denmark for more than four centuries ; and this bargain was carried out without any consultation of the Norse people, against whom force had to be used before they would submit. This was the worst instance of disregard of national feeling which the settlement displayed ; and it is noteworthy that Alexander of Russia, the sentimental liberal, was responsible for it.

It is to the credit of the Great Powers that they showed real moderation in their treatment of defeated France. France was allowed to retain the frontiers of 1791, and thus to preserve Alsace and Lorraine, which she had conquered in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries : these provinces were indeed loyally French in sentiment, though their inhabitants largely spoke German. An indemnity was exacted from France, and armies of occupation were planted on her soil until it was paid ; but it was so reasonable in amount that it was paid off within three years, and France quickly took her place again as one of the leading members of the European comity. As a safeguard against any revival of French aggressiveness, what was meant to be a strong Power was set up on her northern frontier. Belgium, which had been

an Austrian province before the Revolution, was annexed to Holland. The Belgian people were not consulted about this arrangement, which lasted only for fifteen years. But at the moment it seemed to be rational and workable: Belgium and Holland had been under a single government in the sixteenth century, and there were close affinities of race and tongue between the Dutch and the Flemings.

Apart from war-time bargainings and the necessity of guarding against danger from France, the ambitions of the four Great Powers, and their mutual jealousies, were the main factors in the shaping of the settlement.

Russia obtained not only Finland but almost the whole of Poland, pledging herself to maintain the distinct national existence of each, and to endow them with liberal institutions. In the case of Poland the pledge was fully honoured for less than ten years; it was finally cancelled in less than half a century (1863). These acquisitions brought Russia into more intimate contact with Europe; <sup>1</sup> throughout the nineteenth century she exercised a formidable influence, far greater than at any earlier period; and her prestige was at its height during the fifty years following the Congress.

Prussia had to yield to Russia most of the territories which she had acquired in the second and third partitions of Poland.<sup>2</sup> But this made her an almost purely German power, and she got very great compensation in Germany—notably the rich Rhineland and Westphalia, where Napoleon had cleared away a litter of tiny principalities. The possession of the Rhineland, which is the heart of the true Germany, indicated Prussia as the future leader of a united German people. Moreover, being now the next neighbour of France, she was henceforward to be the protagonist in the secular rivalry between the French and German peoples. That position Austria had held for three centuries; in effect she resigned it when she gave up Belgium. Henceforward it is Prussia and not Austria which is the watchful rival of France.

Austria had assented to Prussia's aggrandisement reluctantly, being acutely conscious of the danger that she might lose the hegemony of Germany. Her own acquisitions of territory were small in extent, being confined to Venetia and Lombardy in Italy, and the Adriatic province of Dalmatia.<sup>3</sup> But most of the other principalities of Italy were held by princes who recognised their dependence upon

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 12, 6th Edition Plate 71.

<sup>2</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 24, 6th Edition Plate 67.

<sup>3</sup> See the maps, Atlas, 5th Edition Plates 18 (b) and 25 (a), 6th Edition Plates 39 (c) and 40 (a).

Austria; Italy was almost as completely dominated by Austria as during the revolutionary war it had been dominated by France. In Germany Austria made no important territorial gains. But she succeeded (or hoped she had succeeded) in checkmating the ambitions of Prussia, and the dangerous nationalist ardours of the German people, by an ingenious constitutional rearrangement in Germany which was embodied in the treaties, and therefore placed under the guardianship of all the Powers. A Germanic Confederation, including Austria and Prussia and all the lesser States, was established under the permanent presidency of the Austrian Emperor.<sup>1</sup> On the surface this looked like a concession to the German nationalist movement. In reality it was the deadliest blow which that movement could have received; for the Confederation guaranteed the absolute independence of all its member-States, and pledged them to combine against any attempt to disturb the system. It was a means not of creating unity, but of crystallising disunity and making it permanent.

Thus Austria had put herself in a position to defeat the nationalist aspirations of both Germany and Italy, and had made herself the inevitable foe of nationalists in both countries. In both cases these ingenious, artificial and short-sighted arrangements lasted only for half a century, and in the end they brought upon Austria the greatest humiliations of her history. But in the meanwhile it was to the interest of Austria, more than of any other Power, to render the treaty settlement of Vienna sacred and unalterable; and this made her, during the next generation, the chief supporter of reaction and of resistance to all change.

Britain was the only one of the four Great Powers who made no important territorial acquisitions in Europe. She retained Heligoland, Malta, and the Ionian Islands, which she had occupied during the war; the last-named she was later (1864) to transfer voluntarily to Greece. The kingdom of Hanover returned to its connexion with the British Crown; but this unnatural connexion had no advantage for either side, and it was a fortunate thing for Britain when, on the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, the Hanoverian Crown passed in the male line to her uncle, the Duke of Cumberland; for if this had not happened Britain must have been involved in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866.

Britain did not even retain all her conquests overseas; she restored to France her West Indian Islands and her

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 23 (*d*), 6th Edition Plate 72 (*c*).

West African and Indian trading-posts, without demanding any compensation ; she even allowed France to resume fishing-rights off the coast of Newfoundland ; she restored their West Indian possessions to Denmark and Holland, and gave back to Holland the rich island of Java, which she had held for five years. She was the only Great Power that gave up any territory held at the close of the war. She kept, indeed, Cape Colony and Ceylon, because of their importance as commanding the ocean route to India ; but she paid to Holland a large sum of money for Cape Colony. This was the only instance in which any of the Great Powers paid compensation for any of their acquisitions ; and the payment was made by the only Power which had held her own and made conquests throughout the war. It cannot be said that Britain made a greedy use of her complete ascendancy on the seas, seeing that there was no power on earth which could have prevented her from keeping all she had won, had she chosen to do so ; and her statesmen deserve credit for moderation in peace as well as for tenacity in war. But Britain might well be content. With the unchallenged dominion of the seas, with Canada, Australia and South Africa, with the splendid empire of India, with supremacy in the West Indies, and with the possession of trading-posts scattered about the world, she was the centre of an extra-European empire of unexampled magnitude and variety, in comparison with which the acquisitions of the European allies seemed paltry and insignificant.

Britain's prestige was indeed at its height. She alone had never bent the knee to France during twenty-two years of war ; she alone had never suffered either conquest or revolution. Her institutions were at once the most stable and the most free that existed in the Old World, and they were regarded with as much admiring envy as her inexhaustible wealth and her unapproachable supremacy in industry and trade. She was unquestionably the greatest Power in the world. Her only rival was Russia ; and there could not be a more pungent contrast than that between the huge continuous landlocked empire which stretched from Central Europe to the Pacific, and the ocean commonwealth which girdled the globe—between the most unlimited of despotisms and the mother of free institutions. This contrast was to be expressed in a sharp rivalry which continued throughout the nineteenth century.

On the remaining aspects of the territorial settlement of 1815 we need not dwell. The most noteworthy fact was

that no attempt was made to deal with the decrepit empire of Turkey, which seemed to be on the verge of dissolution. The Powers did not dare to open this question, lest it should awaken the mutual jealousies of Austria and Russia, both of whom hoped to enter into the Turkish inheritance ; and the Eastern Question remained unsolved, to vex Europe for a century to come. It was thus anything but a clear, stable or logical territorial settlement which emerged from the discussions of Vienna. It gave little promise of that permanent peace of which Europe was dreaming : the history of the next sixty years was to be mainly filled with the violent undoing of nearly all the arrangements so painfully and elaborately made by the little-great men of Vienna.

§ 2. *The League of Peace and its Breakdown.*

Yet it was upon this treacherous foundation that the Powers hoped and attempted to rear a structure which should ensure the permanent maintenance of peace. And it was a quite sincere attempt : they genuinely desired to substitute the reign of Law for that of Force. Their method was twofold. In the first place they obtained from every State a solemn pledge to maintain the treaty settlement of Vienna inviolate. If that pledge were observed, the danger of war would be immensely reduced. For the enforcement of this pledge, the statesmen of 1815 trusted to common action on the part of the five Great Powers. Acting together, they could forbid any breach of the peace by other States ; and their mutual watchfulness could, it was thought, be trusted to preserve the Balance of Power among the Great Five themselves. But the drawback of this device was that it would stereotype the Vienna arrangements ; and as time went on, the progressive elements in Europe more and more recognised that the Vienna arrangements must be altered. Hence the League of Peace came to be regarded as an obstacle in the way of progress, an engine of tyranny and reaction ; and this was its ruin. In the second place the Great Powers arranged to hold periodic conferences for the settlement of vexed questions which might lead to war. This scheme of conferences for the prevention of war, instead of merely for the determination of its results, represented a real advance. But it had two defects. The Conferences were limited to the Great Powers, three of which were despotic monarchies ; and, with the memory of the Revolution ever present in their

minds, these Powers were tempted to regard every liberal or national movement in every country as a danger to peace, and to use their overwhelming strength to suppress it. This turned the League of Peace into what the British statesman, Canning, called 'a league of despots to bind Europe in chains.' For these reasons the League of Peace soon broke down, and it was necessary for the progress of civilisation that it should break down. But the effort was not wholly wasted. From it survived what came to be known as the Concert of Europe—the habit of discussion among the representatives of the Great Powers to find the means of averting dangers to peace. The Concert of Europe, though an imperfect instrument, continued to work during the next hundred years, and gave to Europe two longer periods of peace than she had ever known before.

Meanwhile the sentimental Tsar, in the enthusiasm of the time, had invited the princes of Europe to join a 'Holy Alliance' whose members were to pledge themselves to observe 'the sacred principles of the Christian religion' in their relations with one another and with their subjects. With the exception of Britain, who did not wish to endorse a vague undertaking that might mean anything or nothing, all the sovereigns accepted the Tsar's invitation. The 'Holy Alliance' was a mere rhetorical flourish, and never had, or could have, any practical results; it was an expression of the generous emotions with which many besides the Tsar looked forward to an era of peace and just dealing. But its name came to be applied, in bitter irony, to the very different and much more practical organisation of the Great Powers for the rigid maintenance of the treaty settlement.

In 1818, at Aix-la-Chapelle, the first of the projected series of conferences was held; and France, having paid her indemnity, was formally readmitted to the comity of nations, and took her place among the Great Powers. The occasion was felt to mark the triumph of the great System of Peace; and with a florid magniloquence that reads strangely in a formal diplomatic document, it was officially proclaimed to the world that 'the era of permanent peace' had begun. Alas! for the hopes of men. In this very conference the first rift in the lute had appeared. On behalf of Britain, Castlereagh had taken up the position that the co-operation of the Powers must be limited to the maintenance of the treaty, and that there must be no interference in the internal affairs of any State. Metternich had taken the opposite view, that it might be the duty of the Powers to interfere



for the purpose of dealing with a state of things which might endanger peace. The issue had been made plain between the liberal doctrine of non-intervention, which was supported by Britain, and the interventionist doctrine which was to lead to much mischief in the coming years. And Metternich had won a real victory: he had obtained the support of Russia and Prussia, and had laid the foundations of a combination between the three Eastern despotisms which was to be a dominating fact in European politics throughout the period covered by this Book. In 1819 unrest in Germany—mainly among university students—gave him the pretext for introducing in that country a system of rigid repression under the authority of the Germanic Confederation, and at the same time confirmed his ascendancy over Russia and Austria. The Tsar had by this time shed his sentimental liberalism, and henceforth the three Eastern monarchies acted in close harmony. The League of Peace was passing into a League of Despots.

In 1820 and 1821 events took place which made the issue yet clearer. A series of futile revolutions broke out, almost simultaneously, in Spain, Portugal, Southern and Northern Italy; and the Greeks rose in rebellion against their Turkish oppressors. Three conferences, at Troppau (1820), Laibach (1821), and Verona (1822), were held to discuss what should be the attitude of the Powers on these questions. The three Eastern monarchies all supported intervention to crush the revolutions in Italy and Spain. Britain, at first with some support from France, protested against intervention, but hesitated to go so far as to withdraw from co-operation with the other Powers. Austria stamped out the revolutions in Italy with the greatest ease; and in 1823 France agreed to act as the mandatory of the Powers, and sent an army into Spain to crush revolution there.

Meanwhile a ministerial change of great importance had taken place in Britain. Castlereagh died in 1822; and his place as Foreign Secretary was taken by his old rival Canning, who, while accepting the main lines of Castlereagh's policy, did not share his reluctance to break with the European Powers. Canning openly denounced the action of the Powers, and in effect withdrew from co-operation with them. His attitude won for Britain the gratitude of all continental liberals, and made her appear the sole bulwark of liberty in a continent given over to despotism and reaction. And soon an opportunity for more vigorous action offered itself. The Spanish-American colonies were in revolt

against the misgovernment of the mother-country. Having crushed the revolution in Spain, the Eastern Powers next conceived the idea of completing their task by sending a fleet and an army to South America to bring the colonists back to obedience. But this was a question upon which Britain could speak the decisive word. She could not attempt to fight all the Powers on European soil. But they could not reach South America if the British fleet forbade : and Canning gave a very direct negative to the project. A little later he recognised the South American republics as independent States, 'calling a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old.' The tyranny of the Holy Alliance, like the tyranny of Napoleon, stopped at high-water mark ; and the British navy secured the freedom of the South American republics.

Before he recognised the independence of the Spanish colonies, Canning had suggested, through the American envoy in London, that the United States should publicly adopt a similar attitude. The result was that in December 1823 President Monroe sent a message to Congress—the origin of the famous Monroe Doctrine—in which he announced that the United States would resist any attempt at intervention in South America by the European Powers. Thus the Monroe Doctrine was in its origin a declaration of support for British policy ; though at the same time it was, and was meant to be, a warning to Britain, as well as to the other Powers, not to try to extend her power in the New World. It is significant that Jefferson (who had been hostile to Britain during the revolutionary war) urged at this juncture that the United States and Britain should 'sedulously cherish a cordial friendship ; and nothing,' he added, 'could tend more to knit our affection than to be fighting once more side by side in the same cause.' The reactionary policy of Metternich had not only failed as soon as it reached the freedom-giving seas, it had brought about the beginning of a reconciliation between the two great branches of the English-speaking peoples.

Soon another difficulty arose to strain the cohesion of Metternich's reactionary combination. The Greek revolt had since 1821 received widespread sympathy in Western Europe. Volunteers from Britain and France had flocked to help the insurgents ; and among them was the romantic figure of Lord Byron, the only English poet who has ever won great contemporary fame in Europe ; his death at Mesolonghi, in the cause of Greek freedom, was worth an

army to the Greeks. And their gallant fight on sea and land during the first four years of the rising had aroused a great enthusiasm, and had everywhere stimulated nationalist feeling. This was highly alarming to Metternich; and even more perturbing was the fact that popular feeling in Russia was passionately in favour of intervention in favour of the Greeks. There was no reason why Russia should not intervene, since the Turkish Empire was not covered by the Treaty of Vienna. But a successful attack by Russia upon Turkey was the last thing which Metternich wished to see; and his influence with the Tsar was now so great that he succeeded in persuading him to stand aloof, on the ground that the Greek revolt was a revolutionary resistance to constituted authority. The Greeks were left to themselves; and it was only the disorganisation of the Turkish army which enabled them to hold their own until 1825, with the aid of volunteers from the West.

In 1825, however, two things happened which changed the situation. The Sultan brought himself to ask aid from his nominal vassal, Mehemet Ali of Egypt; and an Egyptian fleet and army under Mehemet's son Ibrahim attacked the Greeks with such success that they seemed likely to be not merely defeated but exterminated. The second event of 1825 was that Alexander of Russia died; and his successor, Nicholas I., though a yet sterner reactionary than his brother, was not the man to allow his policy to be dictated by Metternich. In 1826 he made an agreement with Britain and France, whereby the three Powers undertook to compel the Sultan to grant autonomy to the Greeks. In 1827 a joint fleet, sent to enforce these demands under the British admiral, Codrington, destroyed the Egyptian fleet at Navarino; and this battle secured the freedom of Greece. In 1828 a British fleet and a French army cleared the Morea, while a Russian army advanced through the Balkans, and the Sultan was compelled to yield. The independence of Greece—the first of the free nation-States to which the nineteenth century was to give birth—was established by the Convention of London (1829) under the joint protection of Britain, France, and Russia.

Thus the union of the Great Powers had broken down. And the cleavage which had now appeared among them took place just in time to give a chance of success to the revolutions of 1830. These revolutions marked the first serious breach in the Vienna settlement. They were also the beginning of a very clearly marked period, in British

as well as in European history; and we must postpone consideration of them to a later chapter.

The years from 1815 to 1830, whose European events we have surveyed, were in British politics, as we shall see, years of reaction. But the part which Britain played in foreign affairs, where she appeared as the only bulwark against a threatened tyranny, suggests—what is indeed the truth—that the post-war reaction in Britain was far less harsh than in Europe.

[Hazen, *Europe since 1815*; Seignobos, *Political History of Contemporary Europe*; Fyffe, *History of Modern Europe*; Ahson Phillips, *Modern Europe and The Confederation of Europe*; Webster, *Congress of Vienna*; Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism*; Débidour, *Histoire Diplomatique de l'Europe 1814-1878*; Bourgeois, *Manuel Historique de Politique Étrangère*; *Memoirs of Metternich* (Eng. trans.); Stewart, *Memoirs of Castlereagh*; Temperley, *Life of Canning*; Marriott, *Castlereagh*; Brodrick and Fotheringham, *Political History of England 1801-1837*; Marriott, *England in the Nineteenth Century*; Finlay, *History of Greece*; Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy.]

## CHAPTER II

### THE SOCIAL PROBLEM IN BRITAIN AND THE FERMENT OF IDEAS

#### § 1. *Social Disorganisation.*

ON a superficial view, by the showing of the kind of statistics by which the strength of a nation is usually measured, Britain emerged from the long war incomparably stronger and richer than she had ever been before, in spite of the vast public debt with which she was burdened. Her empire girdled the globe. Her ships carried the trade of half the world. She had a monopoly of the new methods of mechanical production, by means of which wealth could be produced at a pace and on a scale hitherto unparalleled.

Yet the generation following the war saw such distress and suffering in Britain as she had never known in the course of modern history. This period of acute suffering was to have a profound effect upon the history of the British Commonwealth. It nearly brought about a violent revolution. It necessitated a far-reaching social and political reconstruction, wherein the British peoples, ahead of the rest of the world, had to feel their way blindly towards a new order appropriate to the new economic foundations upon which civilised society was henceforward to rest : the process has been going on, slowly and painfully, ever since. And meanwhile the rapid increase of population was to bring about an immense movement of emigration, which mainly accounted for the swift growth of the new dominions overseas.

Since 1793 the population of Britain had grown at an unprecedented rate. In 1815 the United Kingdom contained about 19,000,000 inhabitants—about 11,000,000 in England and Wales, about 2,000,000 in Scotland and about 6,000,000 in Ireland. This represented an increase of about 5,000,000, or more than 35 per cent., since 1793 ; the corresponding increase in France was less than 12 per cent. Many students regarded the increase as abnormal and

dangerous. Malthus, in his famous *Essay on Population* (published in 1798, when the problem of the food-supply was causing great perplexity), had argued that the growth of population must always press closely on the means of subsistence; and this was held to account for the widespread and acute poverty which was one of the most distressing features of the time.

But this conclusion was not justified by the facts. Scientific agriculture, industrial machinery, the use of steam-power, the development of British resources in coal and iron, and the expansion of oversea trade, had increased the power of the British people to produce wealth far more rapidly than their numbers had grown. It might have been expected, therefore, that material well-being would have been more widely diffused than ever. Yet the reverse was the case. Never in the course of modern history had there been such widespread distress in the British Islands as there was during the last years of the war and the generation which followed it. It is plain, therefore, that the new wealth had not been diffused over the community as a whole. It had, in fact, mainly gone to enrich two relatively small classes, the landowners on the one hand, the capitalist organisers of industry and trade on the other.

The landowners had seen their rent-rolls grow with every expansion of the area brought under cultivation, and with every rise in the price of corn. They had also taken tribute of the new industries, drawing royalties on every ton of coal extracted from their land, and receiving high prices for the ground on which the factories and the cramped and ugly towns of the industrial areas were built. They were thus immensely richer than they had been half a century before. But a still greater volume of new wealth went to the capitalist organisers of the new industry—a numerous body of men, mostly risen from the ranks, and constantly recruited thence. Relatively little of their wealth was spent on personal ostentation or public munificence. A very high proportion of it was saved, and used as capital; and the rapid development of the new industrial system, and the remarkable improvements in transport, which took place during the next generation, were only rendered possible by this wholesale creation of capital. But this meant that a growing economic power was passing into the hands of those who owned this huge fund of capital. Between them, landowners and industrial capitalists controlled most of the means whereby the nation earned its livelihood.

A substantial proportion of the new wealth came also to the large and growing middle-class, the farmers, the professional men, the merchants, shopkeepers and other distributive agents, the managers and other administrative officers of industry. This was perhaps the healthiest element in the nation. From it sprang most of the creative minds in whom lay the hope of the future—poets, thinkers, scientific investigators, inventors ; and from it the controlling classes were steadily recruited.

There was no sharp cleavage between the middle-class and the controlling classes ; but a very definite cleavage was opening between both and the labouring mass who formed the great majority of the nation. For the workers in town and country alike were progressively being cut off, as the economic change advanced, from that direct and personal concern in the methods and results of their work which their fathers had enjoyed. They were becoming a 'proletariat,' earning their livelihood by the sale of their labour, and having no interest in its products. Most of them were condemned to live in unwholesome and degrading surroundings ; for the farm labourer's cottage was often an overcrowded hovel which it was nobody's business to keep in repair, while the mean streets of the ugly new industrial towns had generally been built without supervision, often back to back, lacking the most rudimentary care for sanitation, and without access even to a supply of pure water : the conditions in which the rising generation was being bred did not promise to produce a virile and self-respecting population. Moreover, in all industries the hours of labour were terribly long : not only the men, but their wives and even their little children, were subject to unending drudgery. Amid all the horrors of this black time the worst were the sufferings of children—underclad children working in the fields in all weathers, and often herded together at night in bare barns ; children labouring like beasts of burden underground in the mines ; children clambering through the suffocating soot to clean rich men's chimneys ; children torn in thousands from their parents, at eight and even five years old, to labour for fourteen or fifteen hours a day in cotton factories, without rest, without tendance, and without hope.

Yet with all this unending toil, and in spite of the wretched conditions of life which they had to endure, multitudes could not earn enough to keep the breath in their bodies. It is the most poignant commentary on the condition of

Britain that (according to the state of trade) from one-tenth to one-fourth of the population of England and Wales were paupers, drawing allowances from the poor-rates to supplement their wages, because these were insufficient to maintain life. What was worst of all, by the receipt of poor-relief men were forced to submit themselves and their families to a sort of slavery to the poor-law authorities, who could hire them out in gangs to work on what terms they chose, or arbitrarily take the children from their wretched homes to be banished to the distant factory towns, with no prospect of ever seeing their parents again. British liberty had become a very unreal thing for those who were subjected to such conditions.

## § 2. *The Condemnation of the Ruling Class.*

To find remedies for these evils was the heaviest obligation which rested upon the leaders of the British community during the following generations. But remedies could only be discovered when the causes of the evil were understood ; and nobody had yet obtained any clear understanding of them.

It was natural that those who suffered, and those who burned with indignation at their sufferings, should lay all the blame upon the wickedness and selfishness of the dominant classes, who seemed to profit by the miseries of the mass ; and this easy explanation has been constantly repeated. But even if it were true, it is unhelpful. To indict a whole class is as foolish as to indict a whole nation, since both will consist of men and women of average virtue ; and when a class becomes exceptionally oppressive, the important thing is to understand what has made it so. In truth the evils from which British society was suffering were due to causes beyond the control of any governing class. The governing class could not be blamed for the economic transformation, which was inevitable. It was the adoption of large-scale production in both agriculture and industry which was crushing out the small men, and turning them into 'proletarians' ; and the introduction of large-scale production was in itself a real and solid advance. Again, the governing class cannot fairly be blamed for the failure of the State to intervene for the protection of those who suffered by the change ; for this was primarily due to the reigning economic doctrine which condemned all State interference with the conduct of industry, except in regard



to foreign trade. The predominance of this doctrine of *laissez faire* has frequently been attributed to the influence of Adam Smith and the economists of his school, and it has been assumed that its ascendancy was greatest in the middle of the nineteenth century. But this is a mistaken view. Throughout the eighteenth century this theory had held the field; and the old laws whereby Elizabeth and the Stewarts had tried to regulate wages, prices and the conditions of labour had fallen into desuetude. *Laissez faire* was at its height during the half-century from 1780 to 1830, after which it began to be qualified by factory legislation and in other ways. The governing class cannot fairly be condemned for having failed to regulate a vast economic change which was beyond their comprehension, and with which the most enlightened opinion of the time forbade them to meddle.

Least of all can they fairly be blamed for the bitter aggravation of social distress which resulted from the French Revolution and the long wars that it caused. These wars had seriously restricted the outlet for the new manufactures, and had therefore produced unemployment, and prevented the natural rise of wages; they had restricted the import of food-stuffs, and made it necessary to stimulate home-production to the maximum extent, with the result that the agrarian revolution was accelerated, and food-prices were raised out of proportion to wages; they had brought about a stoppage of cash payments (1797-1821) and a consequent depreciation in the purchasing power of paper-money, to such an extent that a labourer with 9s. a week was only able to purchase 7s. 6d. worth of goods. Finally, the fear of revolutionary conspiracy (perhaps unreasonable, but not unnatural) had led to the prohibition of combinations among work-people, which might have modified the sufferings of the time. In every way the revolution and the war had intensified the distress of the labouring classes, and widened the gulf between them and the controlling classes.

But all the more because of this widening gulf, it was natural that the governing class should be held responsible for the intolerable ills under which the people were groaning. The question of responsibility had, on the whole, been little discussed during the war: perhaps the war was to blame, or Napoleon, or his Continental System. But when these possible explanations had been removed—when the war was over and things became worse instead of better—other scapegoats had to be found; and loyalty to the whole

system of government, and to the whole social order, began to be undermined as it never had been undermined during the war.

And indeed there were other grounds of complaint for which the ruling class could far more reasonably be held responsible than for the unhealthy economic condition of the country, and which justified the demand for a change of system. All political power rested with the limited class of landowners, now markedly out of touch with the feelings and needs of the bulk of the nation. They held their power by means of a grossly unrepresentative electoral system, and used it to endow themselves and their families with pensions and offices. The whole system of society seemed to be organised for their advantage. Their sons, brothers, and protégés held the richest livings in the Church, often without performing the duties of their offices; the prizes of the law fell to them also. The whole legal system seemed to exist to buttress the power of this small, rich, ascendant class, and to keep the mass of the nation in subjection. Thus the Corn Laws were regarded as a device for enriching landlords by raising the price of poor men's bread; and though this complaint had no force in regard to the Corn Laws of the war period, which had not increased the price of bread, it had greater validity in regard to the Corn Law of 1815, which was passed in order that agriculture might not be ruined by the sudden fall of prices after the war. The Game Laws, again, seemed to show that the lives and limbs of poor men mattered nothing in comparison with the pleasures of the rich. Year by year these laws were made more ferocious, because starving men were seeking food in rich men's coverts, and the rich men saw in this the evidence of a revolutionary spirit. Thus an Act of 1816, passed through Parliament without a word of comment, provided the penalty of transportation for seven years for being found at night in possession of any contrivance for trapping rabbits. And this was only a piece with the hideous ferocity of the penal code, to which new barbarities were constantly added. The death sentence was ordained for no less than two hundred offences, such as sheep-stealing, or stealing linen from a bleaching-ground. These futile ferocities defeated themselves, because juries refused to convict when conviction would lead to such disproportionate penalties. Yet Parliament went on inventing new ferocities, and refused to listen to the protests of Romilly and Mackintosh, who strove to mitigate the cruelties of the

code ; because the governing class believed, as it had believed ever since 1792, that there was a constant danger of violent revolution, which only terrorism could hold in check.

Such an attitude, however, challenged the very danger which it feared. What but hatred could be aroused by such a system ? By making and tolerating such laws the governing class made it appear reasonable to regard them as the source of all the nation's ills. To sweep them away, by violence if need be, seemed to a growing number of men the first step towards a better order. This is the sort of temper which produces destructive upheavals ; and it was widely prevalent in Britain in the years following the Great War. 'My views of the state of England,' wrote Earl Grey in 1819, 'are more and more gloomy. Everything is tending, and has for some time been tending, to a complete separation between the higher and lower orders of Society—a state of things which can only end in the destruction of liberty, or in a convulsion which may too probably produce the same result.'

### § 3. *Schools of Political Thought.*

These miseries and protests challenged thought, and led to a great deal of fruitful if bewildered speculation about the problems of national reconstruction. The literature of the period was deeply influenced by this ferment of thought ; it exercised the minds of politicians and publicists of every school ; and out of it sprang several distinct currents of political and social theory.

In the dominant landowning class the hidebound Toryism of the revolutionary age still held the upper hand, and for seven years after the peace dictated national policy. Obstinate resistance to all change, a deep distrust of all popular movements, and a readiness to resort to forcible repression on the least provocation, formed the barren creed of this school. But some of the younger Tories, notably Canning, Huskisson and Peel, were growing out of this stagnant reactionism. Though they were averse from any large change, they recognised the existence of grave abuses, held that the existing system could only justify itself by removing them, and had given some study to modern economic and political theories. The Whigs, who included many of the more open-minded members of the governing class, were timid and bewildered ; but they were genuinely opposed to mere blind repression, and there

was a genuinely liberal wing amongst them, ready for substantial changes.

The noisiest school of reformers consisted of the Radicals. Almost unrepresented in Parliament, where their chief representative was the superficial and self-advertising Sir Francis Burdett, Radicalism was a strong and growing force in the country. The Radicals advocated manhood suffrage and annual Parliaments as a sure remedy for every ill; but they had no constructive social programme, no idea of the use they would make of political power if they got it, no solidly based knowledge of the complex social organism whose diseases had to be dealt with. Their creed was as barren as the Toryism of Lord Eldon; and their victory would have brought mere chaos. The most effective of the Radical leaders was William Cobbett,<sup>1</sup> a journalist of genius and a very typical Englishman. Full of prejudices and whimsies, Cobbett was a lover of justice and a hater of tyrannies and shams; but he was incapable of constructive thought. He loved beef and beer and a good horse and the English countryside; he loathed factories and towns and tea-drinkers and army-contractors; and he had become a Radical because he believed that borough-mongers and holders of national debt were driving his beloved England to the dogs. In 1816 he suddenly reduced the price of his *Political Register* to twopence; and as he could write English with a masculine vigour and lucidity which never failed to hold the attention of the reader, he quickly obtained a portentous influence, especially among the factory-workers of the North, who were stirred into political activity by his full-blooded denunciations. With him may be linked the fluent mob-orator Hunt, who moved about the country stirring up anger and enthusiasm; and the veteran Major Cartwright, salt of the earth and most consummate of bores, who devoted himself to founding Hampden Clubs, which were regarded by the governing class as hotbeds of revolutionary frenzy.

There was little that was constructive in all this Radical tub-thumping; but it gave a vent to the dissatisfactions of the time, and stimulated solidier minds to remedial thinking. There were certain small groups of intellectuals at work, whose thought was to exercise a profound influence during the course of the next generation, though their writings had, of course, no such vogue as Cobbett's. This was the age of the Classical Economists. Malthus, Ricardo, M'Culloch and

<sup>1</sup> There is a good short life of Cobbett by E. I. Carile.

others were developing the doctrine of Adam Smith, turning Political Economy into the 'dismal science' of Economics, and laying down the stony tables of a body of economic law which claimed almost the validity of the law of gravitation. We cannot pause to analyse their contributions to economic thought, some of which, such as Ricardo's law of rent, were of permanent value. Their work was mainly analytic; but in effect they preached a doctrine of reconstruction, the doctrine that the welfare of the community is best served when the maximum degree of freedom is allowed to individual energy and initiative, and when every man is made to feel his personal responsibility for his own well-being.

Closely linked with the Economists were the group of social and legal reformers who looked to Jeremy Bentham as their leader, and whose theories led towards very much the same kind of conclusions as those of the Economists. In 1815 Bentham was a precise, methodical, vain old bachelor of sixty-seven, very much of a recluse, who had devoted his life to the study of law, and of the principles upon which law could be made to serve what he defined as the supreme end of society, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.' This formula, according to the Benthamite creed, supplied an infallible test of the validity of all laws and institutions; and the true path of reform could be marked out with almost mathematical certainty by a sort of calculus of pains and pleasures based on tables drawn up by the prophet Jeremy. A corollary from Bentham's main doctrine was even more important than the main doctrine itself. It was that 'every man is the best judge of his own happiness'; from this plausible but highly disputable assertion it seemed to follow that the State ought not to dictate how the happiness of its citizens should be attained, and that, in regard to those functions which the State necessarily undertook, every man should be consulted, since his happiness was involved. This was, in truth, the doctrine of individualist democracy, based not on abstract rights, but on utility.

More important, however, than the Benthamite doctrines were the methods of minute and painstaking study which the Benthamites applied to the problems with which they dealt. They may almost be described as the founders of scientific social and political investigation; and their work and example in this sphere were to be of immense value in the vast labours of reconstruction which lay ahead. The professed Benthamites were always few in number, and they

had, and deserved, the reputation of being arid and pedantic. But they wielded, thanks to their industry and their solid knowledge, an influence out of all proportion to their number or their public fame. Most of the detailed administrative reform of the next generation was largely due to them. The practice of holding detailed and systematic inquiries as a preliminary to legislation, which was so marked a feature of the next era, was an application of Benthamite methods ; and in some of the most important of these inquiries the leading part was played by disciples of Bentham, such as Francis Place and Edwin Chadwick, who were in their element in such work.

Alongside of the Economists and the Benthamites, whose speculations led to individualist conclusions, other writers were at work who saw no hope of improvement save in the co-operative action of the community. Their conclusions were as yet vague, conflicting, and uncertain ; they dealt with visions of a happier order rather than with the hard facts of the moment ; but just for that reason, though they had little influence upon the directing classes, they aroused an enthusiastic interest among the working classes. They were the founders of the school of Socialist thought in Britain.

One among them, a Newcastle workman named Thomas Spence, had been preaching land nationalisation as the only path to national well-being ever since 1775. In the ferment of the years following 1815 his theories obtained a sudden vogue ; and a mushroom growth of Spencean Societies aroused acute alarm among the governing class of land-owners. But the greatest of these pioneers of Socialist thought was Robert Owen, a successful cotton manufacturer, who, not being content to make wealth unless he could also make happiness for his workpeople, had created a model factory and village at New Lanark in Scotland, which became a place of pilgrimage for visitors from all parts of Europe. In 1815, moved by the spectacle of wretchedness which Britain presented, he began to propound remedies ; and his opinions developed so rapidly that by 1817 he had become definitely a Socialist, though the word was not coined until some years later. He convinced himself that a system which stimulated each individual to aim at the maximum profit for himself would never lead to a just distribution of the wealth produced, or render possible the increased prosperity for all men which the great mechanical inventions ought to have brought about ; and he concluded that Government

ought to undertake both the production and the distribution of wealth. How this was to be done, he never worked out with any definiteness, for he was not a clear or systematic thinker. His thought had little direct influence upon the actual constructive work that was soon to begin. But it stirred the thinking members of the working classes.

After Owen a succession of writers, some of them Owen's superiors in clearness and trenchancy, followed along his track; and the work of such men as William Thompson, Thomas Hodgskin, and Piercy Ravenstone contained within it the germs of most later Socialist teaching: it has even been held that all the main doctrines of Karl Marx are to be found in these early British Socialists. Hodgskin, formerly a naval lieutenant, notably broke away from the generous tolerance which Owen had displayed, and preached class-war for the overthrow of the existing social order.

The first years of peace were thus a time when new ideas on political and social problems were very actively fermenting in Britain. From all sides the old order was threatened; the Economists and the Benthamites, equally with the Radicals and the Socialists, were demanding the overthrow of the landowning oligarchy; and it is not surprising, in face of all these new doctrines, and of widespread unrest, that the dominant classes should feel that the very foundations of society were threatened.

#### § 4. *Literature and the Social Problem.*

The decade which followed Waterloo was not only a time of active political thought, it was one of the supreme ages of English literature. Wordsworth and Coleridge were still in their prime. Scott had just begun (1814) the great series of Waverley Novels, the richest body of imaginative prose that has ever come from a single brain. Jane Austen's delicately ironical studies of English rural life were being published. Lamb, De Quincey, Landor, and Hazlitt were adding to the riches of English prose. And, greatest glory of the time, this decade saw the flowering of the genius of three young poets, Keats, Shelley, and Byron. Scarcely even the Elizabethan age can present so dazzling a galaxy of great names.

But in one respect this age presents a marked contrast to the Elizabethan age. With two exceptions all its great writers were deeply preoccupied with the problems of political and social organisation. Alone among the poets,

Keats could dwell in visions of beauty undisturbed by the turmoil of political controversy; and no reader of Jane Austen would suspect that the placid society she described was on the verge of revolution. But the work of all the rest was deeply coloured by the hopes and fears, the compassion or the indignation, inspired by the problems of the time. There never was a great age of literature more saturated with thoughts and dreams about the common weal and the common woe.

Most significant was the contrast between the older writers and the younger. The young men, who had no memory of the ardent hopes and bitter disillusionment of the French Revolution, were inspired by the spirit of revolt. Byron and Shelley—both themselves born of the governing class—were apostles of revolution. They flouted not merely the social injustices but the normal conventions of their time, and expatriated themselves from a land whose evils seemed to them intolerable. Byron wrote with bitter scorn of the ruling class:—

For what were all these country patriots born?  
To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn!

Shelley's protest went deeper, and struck at the whole social order:—

Men of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay you low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear? . . .  
Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number!  
Shake your chains to earth, like dew!  
Ye are many, they are few!

This was the very temper of blind revolutionary fury, such as filled many men in the England of 1819. It was fine rhetoric; but it gave little guidance as to the mode in which the unvanquishable lions were to secure either freedom or happiness when they had got rid of their chains, and devoured their keepers.

The older writers, who remembered the Reign of Terror and the tyranny of Napoleon, were more conscious of the futility of blind revolution; but they were not for that reason less conscious of the evil plight into which their country had fallen. Coleridge bemoaned 'a population mechanised into engines for the manufactory of new rich men; yea, the machinery of the wealth of the nation made



up of the wretchedness, disease and depravity of those who should constitute the strength of the nation.' Southey denounced competition as the reason why 'the poverty of one part of the nation seems to increase in the same ratio as the riches of another part.' 'There is no stability anywhere,' he lamented; 'a nation on the move from village to town, from town to newer countries.' Coleridge and Southey were Tories. They longed for stability, as a condition of social health, and had no patience with the frothy outcries of the Radicals. But they were far indeed from the Toryism of the Eldonian school. Coleridge was to be the prophet of a reaction against the arid dogmas of the Economists and the Benthamites; and two schools of thought which counted for a good deal in the next generation, the Christian Socialists and the Oxford neo-Catholics, traced a part of their inspiration to Coleridge's teaching.

Scott represented another type of Toryism. Lamenting the unrest of his time, he took refuge in the past, and made his generation feel the charm of ages which men had been content to dismiss as dark and unprogressive: the beauty of loyalty, of faith, of stability, of content even amid poverty. He thus helped to destroy the self-complacency of the Age of Reason, and led men to ask themselves whether, after all, they had been so much more successful than their ancestors in making life a worthy and noble thing. This was part of a healthy challenge and criticism of the new order which might help to better it.

If Britain was restless and unhappy in these years, her intellect and her imagination were alive. It was not only in the machinery of wealth-production that she was rich, but in the nobler stuff of ideas. And this gave hope that she would find her way out of the morass into which she had been plunged by the coincidence of a tremendous social transformation with a world-shaking war.

[Spencer Walpole, *History of England from 1815* (6 vols.); Holland, *Further Memoirs of the Whig Party*; Hammond, *Village Labourer, Town Labourer, Skilled Labourer*; Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*; Carlile, *Cobbett*; Smith, *Cobbett*; Kent, *English Radicals*; *Life of R. Owen, written by Himself*; Podmore, *Life of Owen*; Beer, *History of British Socialism*; Leslie Stephen, *English Utilitarians*; Wallas, *Life of Francis Place*; Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*; Dicey, *Law and Public Opinion in England*; Elton, *Survey of English Literature 1760-1830*.]

## CHAPTER III

### THE YEARS OF REACTION AND THE FIRST MOVEMENTS OF REFORM

(A.D. 1815-1830)

#### § 1. *Unintelligent Reaction, 1815-1822.*

THE seven years which followed Waterloo were a gloomy and unhappy time, which gave no promise of the reconstruction that Britain sorely needed. They were all the more gloomy because men had expected that prosperity would return with peace, and were proportionately disappointed when things became worse instead of better. Merchants had accumulated stocks, in expectation of a large demand from Europe; but Europe was too impoverished to buy. At the same time the conclusion of peace brought to an end the large war-orders of the British and Allied Governments. Factories had to be closed down; while disbanded soldiers and sailors had to be provided for. Wages fell; and the labouring class, already existing on the margin of subsistence, was thrown into grave distress. Poor relief was their only refuge, and the ruinous allowance-system was more and more extended, while the rates rose by leaps and bounds. There were frequent food-riots, and rick-burnings, and attacks on machinery; indeed, the prevailing misery was so great that the surprising thing is, not that disorders took place, but that they did not take place on a wider scale. Even agriculture suffered. The price of corn suddenly fell 40 per cent., and many farmers, who had made their calculations on the basis of war prices, were ruined.

No Government, however enlightened, could have found immediate and effectual remedies for this state of things. But the reactionary Tory Government of 1815 made no attempt even to alleviate any part of the distress save the sufferings of farmers and landowners, for whose benefit it obtained from Parliament a new Corn Law forbidding the importation of corn when the home price was below 80s. a

quarter. But this appeared, to the mass of starving work-people, a heartless aggravation of their sufferings : cheaper bread was the one bright spot in the gloom, and even this was to be taken from them. Encouraged by the prevailing distress, Radical agitation became feverishly active. Cobbett reduced the price of his paper ; Orator Hunt addressed great mass meetings ; Major Cartwright found many recruits for his Hampden Clubs ; and Spencean Societies sprang into being to advocate Spence's panacea of *land nationalisation*. In the eyes of good Tories, *hag-ridden* by the nightmare of revolution, all this ferment seemed to prove that there was a systematic, nation-wide conspiracy for the overthrow of the British constitution. Government interpreted every cry of distress as a threat of violent revolution ; and instead of taking any measure for the alleviation of distress, they persuaded themselves that they had to defend their country against anarchy, and launched a campaign of repression which almost gave reality to the imaginary peril they feared. For the peril was imaginary. The deepest impression which remains after any close study of the period is a sense of the stolid patience of the British people under grave sufferings, and their steadfast avoidance, except in very rare instances, of any resort to violence.

Popular opinion laid the blame for the policy of Government mainly upon three ministers, Eldon, Castlereagh, and Sidmouth, and no British ministers have in modern times been the objects of such intense detestation as these three. Yet they were neither malignant nor cruel ; they were only unimaginative and blinded by preconceived prejudices. The ultimate result of their policy was to bring about a great change in the sentiments of large sections of the nation which had at first shared their fears of revolution, and to convince the sober middle classes of the necessity for large political changes.

It was Sidmouth, as Home Secretary, who was directly responsible for the repressive system ; and it was the methods which he adopted that turned public feeling against Government. For Sidmouth depended for his information mainly upon paid spies and informers, who were often tempted to fabricate evidence wherewith to earn their pay. Evidence of the existence of a revolutionary conspiracy such as would stand investigation was conspicuously lacking.

Thus in 1816 there was a riot after a Radical meeting in Spa Fields, and a London jury was asked to believe, on the

unsupported evidence of an informer, that the leaders of the riot had intended to seize the Tower of London and were guilty of high treason. It contemptuously refused to convict. Yet on the strength of this episode, *Habeas Corpus* was suspended. Again, in 1817, the spies promised an insurrection in Lancashire; but all that happened was a pitiful procession of a few hundred starving workmen who set out to march to London, equipped with blankets, in order to present a petition to the Regent. They were turned back by troops, and some of them were imprisoned for months without trial. Later in the year there were futile little risings, by handfuls of men, in Derbyshire and Yorkshire; but it was proved in court that these miserable victims (some of whom were hanged) had actually been persuaded to take up arms by an infamous Government spy named Oliver. But the culmination came in 1819, when a perfectly orderly and unarmed crowd, attending a Radical demonstration in St. Peter's Fields (Peterloo), Manchester, was charged by yeomanry and hussars. Instead of reprimanding the magistrates who had ordered this criminal folly, or even investigating the case, Government promptly congratulated them on their vigour and resolution, and then proceeded to pass through Parliament a series of six Acts, designed to make Radical agitation impossible. The Six Acts were the culmination of the period of reaction. They forbade public meetings unless summoned by a Lord-Lieutenant, a Mayor, or five justices, and increased the taxes on popular literature. Yet it is noteworthy that even at the height of the repression no attempt was made to restrict the freedom of the press. At the very worst the British people enjoyed a higher degree of liberty both of speech and of the press than existed in most European countries.

In 1820 two episodes at last occurred which gave some colour of justification to the action of Government. A group of some thirty desperate men formed a mad plot, known as the Cato Street Conspiracy, to murder the Cabinet; and a number of Glasgow Radicals, after creating a panic in that city, offered resistance to a body of troops in what was called the Battle of Bonnymuir. But these events happened after a stupid and maddening system of repression had been maintained for five years. Many held that it was the policy of Government which had caused these troubles; and for that reason these episodes did not undo the impression created by Peterloo and the Six Acts. The whole series of events aroused a fierce indignation throughout the country;

and it was not Radicalism but the Tory reaction which received its death-blow from the infamies of Oliver and the brutalities of Peterloo. The solid opinion of the country began to forget its fear of revolution, and to come round to the view that far-reaching political changes were necessary.

Meanwhile the confidence of the nation in its institutions was being undermined in another way by the character and conduct of the royal family. George III. had lost his reason, his sight and his hearing, and had been in complete seclusion since 1810. The Prince of Wales, who acted as Regent until George III.'s death in 1820, when he succeeded to the throne as George IV., was a mean, profligate, elderly fop, for whom nobody could feel any respect. He had long lived apart from his indiscreet and foolish wife. Such respect for royalty as survived had centred in his only child, the gentle Princess Charlotte, to whose accession people had looked forward with hope. But her death, in 1817, had destroyed these hopes. There remained the six younger brothers of the Regent, none of whom commanded public respect—Shelley described them as 'the dregs of their dull race.' But none of them had recognised children, and until a daughter, Princess Victoria, was born to the Duke of Kent in 1819, the very succession to the throne seemed insecure. Many prophesied that within a few years monarchy would be extinct in Britain.

The prestige of the monarchy reached its lowest ebb when, on the accession of George IV., his errant Queen returned from her unconventional wanderings on the continent to claim her royal rights, and the King not merely refused them, but instituted proceedings for a divorce in the House of Lords. It is needless to dwell upon this ugly and squalid dispute, which engrossed the public mind during 1820, and disgusted all decent people. Popular sympathy was all on the side of the Queen, but it arose less from belief in her innocence than from contempt for the King. And as the ministerial party supported the Divorce Bill, their already heavy load of unpopularity was increased. Crown and Government had alike sunk into public odium.

### § 2. *Progressive Toryism and the Beginning of Reform, 1822-1829.*

In 1822 the dismal period of unqualified reaction came to an end. Lord Castlereagh committed suicide; Lord Sidmouth resigned; and, in the reconstruction of the ministry

which followed, the younger and more progressive Tories obtained the upper hand. They were opposed to any far-reaching constitutional change; but they believed that the ascendancy of the landowning class could only be maintained by means of a liberal and reforming policy. They now got an opportunity of testing the validity of this conception. They were helped by a revival of trade, which for a time put an end to the troubles of the previous years, and they unquestionably did good and useful work.

Canning became Foreign Secretary; and we have already observed<sup>1</sup> the vigour with which he made Britain the champion of freedom against continental despotism. Canning's friend Huskisson, who was a student of Adam Smith and a disciple of Ricardo, became President of the Board of Trade, and began to carry into effect the ideas of the Economists. Already, in 1819, the extent of Ricardo's influence had been shown when a committee of which Huskisson was a member and Peel chairman recommended, on the strength of Ricardo's demonstration, the resumption of cash payments, which at once raised the purchasing power of all wages. Now Huskisson took a step towards freedom of trade by a bold revision of the tariff, and by modifying the Navigation Acts so as to make reciprocal arrangements with other Powers possible. This was noteworthy as the first breach in the exclusive trade-policy upon which the British imperial system had been based ever since Charles II. Meanwhile Sir Robert Peel,<sup>2</sup> as Home Secretary, had swept away Sidmouth's wretched system of espionage. He also took in hand the long overdue revision of the Penal Code, guided largely by Bentham's legal studies. No less than one hundred capital offences were abolished, and English law was relieved in a large measure from the savagery which had disgraced it.

These were real and substantial reforms—inspired, let it be noted, by the teachings of the Economists and the Benthamites. But far more important was another reform which was primarily due not to any minister, but to Francis Place, the diligent and learned tailor of Charing Cross, who was one of Bentham's most intimate disciples. Place had given close study to the Trade Union movement, and was impressed by the injustice and the mischievous results of the Combination Acts, which forbade Trade Unions to work

<sup>1</sup> Above, Chap. i. p. 308.

<sup>2</sup> There is a good short life of Peel, by J. R. Thursfield, in the 'Twelve English Statesmen' Series.

openly.<sup>1</sup> Working through his friend, Joseph Hume, a Benthamite member of Parliament, he got Huskisson to appoint a parliamentary committee on trade combinations and the export of machinery (which had hitherto been prohibited). Place organised so skilfully the evidence of masters and men which was laid before the committee that a unanimous report in favour of the repeal of the Combination Acts was adopted, and a bill giving effect to this recommendation passed almost unnoticed through Parliament (1824). But there followed such an activity in the formation of Unions, and such an epidemic of strikes, that many employers protested, and Huskisson appointed a second committee of inquiry, whose report was intended to recommend the cancellation of the repeal. Place and Hume, however, once again presented the case and arranged the evidence with such skill that though a second Act, modifying the first, was introduced in 1825, it did not interfere with the right to form Trade Unions, which henceforth became perfectly legal organisations, though their scope was restricted. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the importance of the repeal of the Combination Acts in the social history of the British people. We shall see some of its results in later chapters.

The work of the reconstituted Tory ministry between 1822 and 1827 had done much to redeem the discredit of the previous years, and seemed to justify Canning's belief that the old political system could, if intelligently directed, restore health to the body politic. But the Tory oligarchy was restive and uneasy. Its members felt that they were being led along dangerous paths. They disliked and distrusted the foreign policy of Canning and the economic policy of Huskisson. Nor were they much more in sympathy with the ideas of Peel; but Peel was less dangerous than the others, because he was a staunch opponent of Catholic Emancipation, which Canning and Huskisson supported; and, as we shall presently see, Catholic Emancipation was becoming a very urgent problem. Even between 1822 and 1827, therefore, it was evident that no large measures of reform would be possible so long as the Tory oligarchy controlled Parliament. The events of 1827-30 drove this moral home more clearly, and at the same time paved the way for greater changes by breaking up the solid phalanx of Toryism.

In 1827 the colourless Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool,

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. VIII. chap. vi. p. 220.

was disabled by illness, and Canning succeeded to his office. But Peel refused to serve under Canning, because of their difference on Catholic Emancipation ; the more extreme Tories went into open opposition ; and Canning was only able to form a ministry with the support of the Whigs, who contributed members to a cabinet for the first time since 1807. This was the beginning of the crumbling away of the Tory ascendancy. But the breach in the party did not last long. Canning died after holding office for only four months (August) ; an attempt to continue the ministry under his friend, Lord Goderich, failed ; and in January 1828 the Old Tories were back in power, with the Duke of Wellington as Prime Minister. What is more, they were reunited ; for the Canningites under Huskisson joined the ministry. But relations between the two wings were now so strained that in three months the Canningites were out again and had practically joined the Whigs. Among them were two men, Lord Palmerston and William Lamb (later Lord Melbourne), who were to become Whig Prime Ministers.

Wellington and Peel, however, still had a majority, for the Canningites were a party of leaders without followers. And Peel was able to go on with the policy of Tory reform. In 1828 he carried two measures of real importance. He repealed the Test and Corporation Acts, and thus relieved the Dissenters at last from the political disabilities under which they had suffered since the Restoration. And he carried out an invaluable reorganisation of the metropolitan police system, creating a disciplined force in place of the absurd little bodies of watchmen under a variety of different authorities which had hitherto played with the maintenance of order. His system was rapidly imitated in other large towns ; and the names of 'Bobbies' and 'Peelers' which are affectionately bestowed upon these guardians of the law are a pleasant memorial of the man who founded their fine tradition.

Whether the Tories would have suffered this reforming activity to continue it is impossible to say. For in 1829 their unity was suddenly strained and broken by an unexpected blow. It came, with a fine irony, from Ireland, whose claims had been overridden in 1801, and neglected ever since.

### § 3. *The Irish Problem and the Disruption of the Tory Party.*

The Act of Union might possibly have brought peace to Ireland if it had been promptly followed by ameliorative



measures, and especially if the tacit pledge that it would be followed by Catholic Emancipation had been honoured. Because this pledge was broken, the Union brought not peace but a sword.

The evils from which Ireland suffered were of two kinds, sectarian and economic, but it was the sectarian questions which alone received attention from the politicians. Most of the disabilities imposed upon Catholics after the Revolution of 1689 had been removed between 1778 and 1793, but they were still excluded from Parliament, and from all important public offices; and though this directly affected only the well-to-do Catholics, it was resented by all as a stigma of inferiority. An even more important source of discontent was the privileged position of the Anglican Church in Ireland, and especially the payment of tithe, which was exacted from the starving peasantry for the support of an alien Church. Tithe was, indeed, one of the chief causes of the incessant agrarian outrages from which Ireland suffered, and Grattan had recognised that a Tithes Act must be an essential element in any reconciliatory legislation. The tithe problem was, in fact, the link between sectarian and economic grievances.

Fundamentally the economic problem was more important and more dangerous than the sectarian problem. The population of Ireland had outgrown the capacity of the country to supply means of subsistence; it had grown to 7,000,000 in 1821. This increase had taken place almost wholly among the desperately poor peasantry, whose sole means of livelihood was agriculture; and the competition for land was so fierce that the tenants were utterly at the mercy of their landlords, who were mostly Protestants and often absentees, or of the numerous sub-tenants or middlemen who intervened between landlord and cultivator. The terror of eviction hung for ever over their heads; to retain a chance of livelihood they had to pay excessive rents which left them nothing but the barest subsistence; they had themselves to carry out improvements which in England were undertaken by the landlord, and submit to see their rents raised because of their own improvements; while those who had the vote (as many had since 1793) had to use it as the landlord ordered, lest they should be evicted. A vicious economic system thus seemed to ensure the political predominance of the Protestant landlord class. What was more, it kept a whole nation in the most abject poverty. This was why the Irish lived upon potatoes, almost the

cheapest form of human food ; for 100 acres of land under potatoes will support four times as many people as 100 acres of land under wheat. It followed that any serious failure of the potato crop must produce terrible consequences, since the peasantry, living in utter penury, had no reserves to fall back upon. There was a serious famine in 1822 ; and, as we shall see, it had important political consequences. A further consequence of these terrible conditions was that (as might be expected) agrarian outrage was almost endemic in Ireland, large parts of which were in an almost lawless condition. Time and again *Habeas Corpus* was suspended, and Insurrection Acts, which practically established martial law, were passed at intervals. These were merely attempts to suppress the symptoms of a deep-seated malady. But nobody attempted to diagnose the disease or find a remedy for it, not even the Irish reformers. All their interest was reserved for the question of Catholic Emancipation.

Since 1801 a Catholic Board, sitting in Dublin, had kept the Catholic question alive by petitions to Parliament and in other ways. In 1805 the leadership of the movement was assumed by Daniel O'Connell,<sup>1</sup> a barrister of good family, who combined extraordinary gifts of popular oratory with great tactical skill. O'Connell was no revolutionary. Educated in France during the revolutionary era, he had learnt to loathe the methods of brute force, and all his influence was used to keep the movement within constitutional channels. Nor was he an enemy of the British connexion ; he wanted to see Ireland, freed of her disabilities, a partner in the British Commonwealth. His eloquence and organising skill were to make him the leader of a peaceful revolution whose results were almost as important for Britain as for Ireland.

From 1810 onwards Catholic Emancipation was repeatedly debated in the House of Commons. It was supported by all the Whigs, and by progressive Tories of the Canningite school ; and this was why Canning and his friends were so much distrusted by most Tories, who regarded sound 'Protestant' views as the test of Tory orthodoxy. More than once there was a favourable majority in the House of Commons ; but, as the House of Lords was steadily hostile, the question remained an academic one.

In 1823 it suddenly ceased to be academic. For O'Connell, deeply moved by the famine of 1822, had resolved to bring

<sup>1</sup> There is a good short life of O'Connell by R. Dunlop in the 'Heroes of the Nations' Series.

the peasantry into a movement which had hitherto been mainly middle-class. He formed a Catholic Association which held great public debates ; he invited contributions, under the name of Catholic Rent, from all classes, and an extraordinarily high proportion of the population, led by the priests, subscribed their monthly pence. No such nationwide public agitation had ever been seen before in the British realms. O'Connell became a popular hero, the accepted leader of a whole nation. But the Orange North was also stirred into activity, and Orange Societies revived. Government took alarm, and in 1825 passed an Act suppressing the organisations on both sides. With a lawyer's skill, O'Connell dissolved his association and formed a new one in accordance with the law. And in 1826 he gave a dramatic demonstration of his power. He put up a candidate pledged to the Catholic cause against the powerful Beresford interest in Waterford, and triumphantly carried the day. If the Beresfords could be defeated, the political ascendancy of the Protestant landlords was threatened. This made the Catholic question an urgent one in British politics ; and this was why, in 1827, the Tories refused to support the ministry of Canning, who was favourable to the Catholic cause.

But a more sensational blow came in 1828. There was a bye-election in Clare ; and O'Connell, though legally ineligible, became a candidate and was triumphantly elected. What had happened in Clare might happen in three-fourths of the Irish constituencies. Moreover, excitement was rising in Ireland to a dangerous pitch. The Lord-Lieutenant reported that nothing could avert civil war save a concession to the Catholic claims.

Wellington and Peel were driven to the conclusion that the concession must be made. Peel, having throughout his career opposed concession, was anxious to resign, as a matter of personal honour. But Wellington, who looked at the situation like a soldier compelled to retire from a position which he has defended as long as possible, felt that if the retreat was to be safely conducted, the commanding officers must stick to their posts. And he was right : only his and Peel's prestige could have carried the bill against the angry opposition of the outraged Tories, who held that their leaders had sold the pass. In 1829, therefore, Catholic Emancipation was forced through Parliament with the aid of the Whigs and the Canningites, and Catholics were admitted to Parliament, and, with three exceptions, to all public offices.

But the passage of Catholic Emancipation shattered the Tory party. It had not had time to get over its intestine feuds when in 1830 George IV. died, and was succeeded by his brother, William IV., an honest, breezy, whimsical prince, and the most popular member of the royal family. The succession of a new King automatically brought a general election; and with that election a new period in British politics began.

[Spencer Walpole, *History of England since 1815* (6 vols.); Twiss, *Life of Eldon*; Temperley, *Canning*; Stewart, *Memoirs of Castlereagh*; Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*; Bruton, *Peterloo*; Peel, *Memoirs*; Parker, *Peel*; Stapleton, *Political Life of Canning* (1822 to 1827); Greville *Memoirs*; Creevey *Papers*; Croker *Papers*; Maxwell, *Life of Wellington*; Dunlop, *Daniel O'Connell*; Lecky, *Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland* (O'Connell); Sheil, *Sketches*; O'Brien (ed.), *Two Centuries of Irish History*; Wallas, *Life of Place*; Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*]

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NEW BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE ERA OF REACTION

(A.D. 1815-1830)

#### § 1. *British Colonial Monopoly and the Movement of Emigration.*

FOR more than two centuries the external history of the British Commonwealth had been dominated by an acute rivalry for colonial power and trade ascendancy, first with Spain and Portugal, then with Holland, finally with France and Spain. With the close of the Napoleonic War this rivalry came to an end. The rival empires had almost been destroyed : Spain's colonies were in revolt ; the Portuguese Empire of Brazil was soon to follow ; France had lost everything save the West Indian islands, and the Indian trading posts, which Britain voluntarily restored to her at the end of the war ; Holland, having lost Cape Colony and Ceylon, was content with Java, restored to her by the same omnipotent mistress of the seas. Britain, on the other hand, emerged from the war with an empire the like of which history had never seen, an empire of continents and sub-continents, India, Australia, Canada, South Africa, linked together by innumerable islands and trading posts that girdled the globe. She was not only the first, she was almost the only, great colonising Power.

For two generations she retained a practical monopoly of colonising activity. Russia, indeed, was consolidating her vast Asiatic empire during these years, and the United States were expanding to the Pacific coast. But in the seafaring activities to which the European Powers had devoted so much of their thought, Britain was left practically alone, save for some spasmodic and unimportant ventures by her old rival France. Europe seemed to be content to leave the fortunes of the extra-European world in British hands, partly because her attention was engrossed by wars and

revolutions, by nationalist struggles and attempts to attain self-government; partly because, after the extraordinary collapse of the European empires which had taken place during the half-century preceding 1815, the belief was widespread that colonial possessions were not worth the cost and trouble of acquisition.

During this interval of two generations Britain was left undisturbed to consolidate and organise her amazing Empire, and to work out new principles of imperial government, the development of which was to be among the most remarkable of her achievements during the nineteenth century. The formulation of the new imperial policy did not begin until the great period of reconstruction opened in 1830; we shall have to study it in a later chapter.<sup>1</sup> But even during the period of reaction certain new forces which were to have an important influence upon this process of reconstruction were clearly emerging, and it is our business, in this chapter, to analyse them.

The first of these new factors was the beginning of that immense stream of emigration which has poured out of Europe into the non-European world during the last hundred years.

The early colonising activities of the European nations had not been due, in any large degree, to the pressure of surplus population; for until the nineteenth century population grew slowly, and the European peoples were able to support themselves by the produce of their own soil. But the Industrial Revolution brought about, in most countries where it established itself, a rapid increase of population and a growing demand both for food and raw materials; while the dislocation which it caused uprooted thousands from their traditional modes of life. Emigration offered a relief for these distresses; and the growing demand for the produce of the new countries made it easy for the emigrants to find work and livelihood in their new homes. For the first time in modern history there was, during the nineteenth century, a serious pressure of population upon the means of subsistence in the old and settled countries of Europe. As the century progressed, and the Industrial Revolution extended its range, this pressure grew; with the result that the overflow of the European peoples into the non-European world took place on a scale unparalleled in earlier history, and the empty regions of the world were rapidly organised, settled, and brought under European influence.

<sup>1</sup> Below, Chap. x. p. 419.

This vast movement of population began in Britain, because Britain was the starting-point of the Industrial Revolution. It was not until about 1845 that the other European peoples took any large part in the movement, because it was not until then that the Industrial Revolution deeply affected them. But from Britain a continuous stream of emigrants was pouring forth during the distressful years after 1815. It turned first, as was natural, towards the United States, and rendered possible the rapid settlement of the *Mississippi Valley*, where five new States were organised between 1815 and 1830. But an even larger stream flowed into Canada, though many of the Canadian immigrants passed over the frontiers into the United States. Some 20,000 settlers entered Canada yearly ; in some years the figure rose to 50,000. Large numbers came from the Highlands of Scotland, where agrarian revolution was in progress ; many came from Southern Ireland, especially after the famine of 1822, which began the stream of Irish emigration on a large scale ; many more were sent out at the expense of English poor-law authorities. Settlers of an excellent type were also brought out during the 'twenties by the Canadian Land Company, which obtained a grant of over 1,000,000 acres in Ontario, and sold lots at low prices to intending emigrants. Its successful experience helped to encourage the scientific emigration of the next period.

Towards distant Australia flowed a much thinner stream, still mainly consisting of transported convicts ; but the growing prosperity of the sheep-breeding industry brought a certain number of free immigrants, and from 1824 onwards two Land Companies, like that of Canada, were bringing out free settlers to New South Wales and Tasmania. And in 1827-29 the first wholly free settlement in Australia was established at Swan River, on the hitherto untouched western coast, by a group of projectors who obtained a large grant of land from the British Government on condition that they paid for the transport of emigrants. The Swan River Colony did not prosper, however ; it is important only as an early example of organised and assisted emigration under the encouragement of Government.

Meanwhile, Government had directly taken in hand the plantation of a large number of settlers in South Africa, partly as a means of relieving the distress at home, and partly to strengthen the hold of Britain over the Cape. In 1819 £50,000 were voted for this purpose by Parliament ; and in the following years some 5000 emigrants were taken

out. They were planted mostly in the eastern part of Cape Colony, near Port Elizabeth, which is still the most British part of the colony.<sup>1</sup> The unquestionable success of this experiment greatly encouraged the schemes of systematic colonisation which distinguished the next period.

The movement of emigration was but in its infancy in the era of reaction, nor had the problem of financing emigration yet been scientifically studied. But already it was apparent that the pressure of population at home was bringing about a new activity in colonising work. It was apparent also that the sudden inrush of new-comers was creating certain difficulties in the colonies in which they settled. In Canada the older French settlements were alarmed at the prospect of being swamped by an English-speaking majority, and this was one of the causes of the distressing friction which grew up between the two races, and which ultimately led to the rebellion of 1837. In Australia the coming of free immigrants made it impossible to maintain the original system of government, which was that appropriate for a gaol. During the long governorship of Captain Macquarie (1809-1821) New South Wales was in effect transformed from a penal settlement into a colony; the area of settlement was widely extended; schools and churches were opened; the first bank was started and the first newspaper published. But in these conditions the despotic power of the Governor could no longer be maintained. In 1824, therefore, a nominated Legislative Council was established for New South Wales; in 1825 Tasmania (where there had been a settlement since 1803) was separated from New South Wales and endowed with a similar Council; in 1828 these bodies obtained control over taxation; and meanwhile regular law courts had taken the place of the rough and ready martial law of early days. All this was the result of the incoming of free settlers. In South Africa, again, the plantation of English colonists alongside of the Boers, who had for a century and a half lived a life apart, was one of the causes, though by no means the chief cause, of the unhappy hostility between the two races which was to produce momentous results in the next period.<sup>2</sup> In every colony, in short, the stream of immigration was producing new problems which were left for the statesmen of the 'thirties to solve.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (b), 6th Edition Plate 89 (b).

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chap. x p. 426 ff.



§ 2. *The Humanitarian Movement : the Missionaries : the Colonial Office.*

The second new factor which made itself strongly felt during this period was the influence of the humanitarian movement, and of the many-sided missionary activity which began in the last years of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarianism had already won one triumph in the prohibition of the slave-trade, so far as British subjects were concerned, in 1807 ;<sup>2</sup> and in 1815 and 1822 the British Government succeeded in obtaining from the Great Powers a general condemnation of this traffic. Not satisfied with these victories, the humanitarian leaders forthwith began to labour for the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire. It was estimated that there were 750,000 slaves within the empire, chiefly in the West Indies and Guiana, in Cape Colony, and in Mauritius. In 1823 a resolution was introduced by Fowell Buxton in the House of Commons condemning slavery as 'repugnant to the principles of the British constitution and the Christian religion,' and urging that it should be gradually abolished by declaring all children born after a certain date to be free. Parliament did not adopt this resolution ; but on the motion of Canning it resolved that the slaves must be protected by regulations, and educated in preparation for emancipation. In accordance with these resolutions the slave-owning colonies were urged to adopt certain regulations. But this suggestion aroused indignation among the planters, who complained that their prosperity was being sacrificed to fanaticism. Jamaica threatened to secede from the Empire ; Demerara suppressed the despatch, lest it should excite the negroes.

But among the Demerara slaves a rumour spread that the British Government was going to help them. A pitiful little insurrection broke out in one plantation. It was mercilessly crushed ; and when it was over, a Nonconformist missionary, the Rev. John Smith, was tried under martial law for having incited the slaves to rebellion. The charge was quite unjust ; yet, after a parody of justice, Smith was condemned to death. He died of exhaustion before the sentence could be carried out. But the story of his sufferings rang through Britain, and did more than all the eloquence of the abolitionists to discredit the institution of negro slavery.

Between 1826 and 1830 the Colonial Office showed a good

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. VIII. chap. vi. p. 222.

<sup>2</sup> See above, pp. 222, 232.

deal of vigour in imposing regulations for the protection of slaves upon all the Crown colonies. But they could not be imposed upon the self-governing colonies; the regulations proposed by Jamaica were so ineffective that the home Government refused to confirm them; and the recalcitrance of the planters completed the conversion of British opinion. By 1830 the British people had resolved that slavery must cease to exist wherever the British flag flew; and in 1833, this resolve was translated into the noble Act whereby slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire.<sup>1</sup> It had taken twenty years (1787-1807) to obtain the abolition of the slave-trade—not a very long period, considering the magnitude of the interests involved. But from the date of Fowell Buxton's resolution of 1823, it took only ten years to achieve the abolition of slavery, at an immense cost to the British taxpayer. Nothing could more trenchantly demonstrate the strength of the humanitarian movement than this remarkable achievement.

So swift a movement of opinion needs explanation; but there is no difficulty in explaining it. The rapid awakening of conscience in regard to the treatment of subject and backward peoples was primarily due to the activity of Christian missionaries. Smith of Demerara, whose sufferings had had so great an effect, was only one of an army of missionaries who had been sent out from Britain to preach Christianity in every part of the earth, since the foundation of the great missionary societies in the last years of the eighteenth century;<sup>2</sup> they were at work everywhere among the backward peoples; and they naturally made it their business to stand up for their simple flocks. In the slave-owning colonies their chief work lay among the slaves, and they saw at close quarters what slavery meant. They were supported by the subscriptions of every Church in Britain; their doings were followed with keen interest by the whole church-going population, and at that date the British people were eminently a church-going people. Letters and messages from missionaries could be, and were, read from every pulpit. There could not be a more effective method of influencing public opinion; and the opinion thus formed was so powerful that no statesman dared disregard it. The British people were acquiring a new interest in the lands in which missionary labours were being carried on; and they were learning to look at the problems of empire from a new angle—from the standpoint of the friends and protectors of

<sup>1</sup> See below, pp. 387, 420.

<sup>2</sup> Above, Bk. VIII. chap. vi. p. 222.

the primitive peoples, who had hitherto had no spokesmen. Beyond a doubt, the immense and growing missionary activities of all the British Churches constituted one of the most potent factors in shaping the new imperial policy which was formulated during the next generation. On the whole the influence of the missionaries was salutary and beneficent. But in some colonies it had some unfortunate results, notably in South Africa, where, as we shall see in a later chapter,<sup>1</sup> the bitter feud which raged between the missionaries and the Boers was the principal cause of a disastrous alienation between the two white races.

The influence of the missionaries was especially effective because they had strong sympathisers among the permanent officials who directed the policy of the Colonial Office ; and the growth of the power of the Colonial Office constitutes yet another of the new factors in imperial affairs which were becoming powerful during this period.

Throughout the history of the British Empire there had been no elaborate central organisation for dealing with colonial problems. From the Revolution period until 1768 there had been a Board of Trade and Plantations, but it was definitely subordinated to one of the Secretaries of State, and, as the name of the Board indicated, colonial questions were during that period regarded largely in connexion with trade policy. A special Colonial Secretaryship had been established in 1768, but it was abolished on the loss of the American colonies in 1782, and the old system was practically re-established. During the French Revolutionary War, however, colonial questions became important in connexion with war policy. In 1794, therefore, a Secretaryship of State for War and Colonies was instituted, to which, in 1801, all the colonial functions of the Board of Trade were transferred, the Board henceforward confining itself to questions of trade policy. Thus the clear separation of colonial questions from trade questions was one of the distinctive notes of the new period ; and this implied a real change of outlook.

The colonial department of the office of War and Colonies had a distinct staff, and a separate organisation ; and as the political chief of the office was nominally responsible for both departments, and few politicians knew much about the innumerable scattered dependencies now included in the British Empire, the permanent officials of the Colonial Office were able to wield a great deal of practically inde-

<sup>1</sup> Below, Chap. x. p. 427.

pendent power. Some of these officials were men of great ability and decided views. Perhaps the ablest of them was Sir James Stephen, who was, during the 'twenties, legal adviser to the Colonial Office, and later (1836) became Permanent Under-Secretary. Even in the 'twenties his was the dominating personality in the office, and he was very nearly the ruler of the colonial empire. Stephen was a member of the 'Clapham sect' of Evangelical Churchmen, who played so great a part in the attack on slavery and in the foundation of the missionary societies; and his influence ensured that the power of the Colonial Office should be uniformly exercised in support of the causes advocated by the Evangelicals, and in accordance with the ideas of the missionaries.

An able, industrious, serious-minded man, Stephen naturally tended to magnify his own office. It was in his time, and in the sphere of colonial administration, that the independent power of what is called 'bureaucracy' first attracted protest and criticism. And it is undoubtedly true that the Colonial Office in this period kept a very tight hold upon colonial Governors, and left them very little freedom to adjust their policy to meet colonial opinion. Nor was it enthusiastic about colonial self-government. An efficient bureaucracy is very apt to be jealous of political liberty, because it is sure that it knows what is good for the people it rules, better than the people themselves. In the earlier history of the British Commonwealth representative institutions after the British model had been set up as a matter of course in every new colony as soon as it was founded. Fifteen new colonies had been acquired since the Colonial Office obtained full control of colonial questions in 1801; and in not one of these had representative institutions been established.

This departure from the established tradition of British colonial policy was so striking that it demands explanation. It was due partly to the unwillingness to give up power which marks all bureaucracies. But there was also a better reason. All the new colonies were in tropical or sub-tropical lands, where a small dominant class of white men lived amid a subject population of slaves or backward peoples. In an earlier age there had been no hesitation in entrusting self-governing powers to the white men in such cases, because there was no general feeling of responsibility for the protection of the subject peoples. But the new generation, inspired by missionary and humanitarian zeal, was determined

that British power should be used to secure justice for the defenceless subjects ; and for that reason it was held to be dangerous to permit unqualified authority to the white settlers in any tropical colony. In all new colonies, therefore, in which backward peoples predominated, representative institutions were withheld, and these colonies were administered as Crown Colonies, under the direct control of the home Government.

The old ideal of political liberty was coming into conflict with the new ideal of social justice. Somehow the two had to be reconciled ; and this was not the least of the problems which now faced the British Commonwealth. The great tradition whereby every British land was a land of political freedom had to be revived. But it also had to be adjusted to the new ideal of justice to subject races which was springing from the work and teachings of missionaries and humanitarians.

### § 3. *The Completion of the Conquest of India.*

In India the years we have been surveying were of the most critical importance : they saw the completion of the fabric of British power, the final establishment of the reign of peace, and the undertaking of a great work of administrative reorganisation.

In an earlier chapter <sup>1</sup> we saw how nearly Wellesley had completed his self-appointed task of making the British power paramount in India ; how he was interrupted when he had almost completed the overthrow of the Mahrattas ; and how his successors, Cornwallis and Barlow, were instructed to undo as much as possible of his work, to return to the old disastrous policy of ' non-intervention,' and in particular to leave the Mahrattas to themselves. The result was an interval of eight years (1805-1813) highly discreditable to the British power.

The Mahratta Powers had always existed by and for plunder, and had never displayed either the capacity or the will to establish a system of just and competent government. If they had made good their supremacy throughout India, as at one time had seemed likely, nothing but misery and endless violence could have resulted. Warren Hastings had checked this danger. Wellesley had scotched it. He had nearly succeeded in breaking up the Mahratta confederacy ; but the reversal of his policy gave the Mahratta chieftains a respite, and encouraged them to dream of reviving their old

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. VIII. chap. iv. p. 194 ff.

ambitions of supremacy. Meanwhile they gave their protection to bands of irregular marauders who, from their bases in the Mahratta States, incessantly raided and plundered a great part of India, including States which were under the protection of the East India Company. Some of these bands were Pathans, drawn from among the fierce Mohammedan warriors of the North-Western hills. Others, known as Pindaris, were drawn from among the miscellaneous irregulars who had followed Mahratta armies in the field. They numbered some 30,000. They were divided into bands who claimed to be attached to one or other of the principal Mahratta chiefs; and the Mahratta chiefs, though they repudiated all responsibility, gave them shelter, and probably took a share of the plunder.

It was profoundly discreditable to the British power that these murderous gangs, whose ferocity surpassed belief, should have been left free to wreak destruction not only over the whole area not subject to British supremacy, but even over regions nominally under British protection. But the Directors refused to allow any measures to be taken against them, lest the result should be a new Mahratta war. The consequence was that British prestige, raised to its acme by Wellesley, underwent a serious decline; and while the Pindaris became every year more insolent and destructive, others also were encouraged to attack this supine power; thus the Gurkhas of Nipal<sup>1</sup> began to make aggressive raids in Northern Bengal and in Oudh. In the end non-intervention did not prevent war; after exposing India to a decade of misery it forced on the biggest war which the British power had yet waged in India.

Lord Minto, who served as Governor-General during the years 1807-1813, when the Napoleonic war was at its height, was an able and honourable man who hated the necessity of tolerating this state of things. But he was debarred from action partly by the strict injunctions of the home authorities and partly by the necessity for using his military resources in an attack on the possessions of France and her vassals. It was under his direction that Java was conquered from the Dutch, and Mauritius and its sister islands from the French. In India he confined himself to establishing treaty relations with the Sikh power under Ranjit Singh in the far North-West, and with the Amir of Afghanistan beyond; these negotiations were dictated by the fear of a possible Franco-Russian attack on India by land.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

In 1813, however, there arrived in India a new Governor-General who was to bring about great changes, during a tenure of power which extended over ten years. This was Lord Moira, later Marquis of Hastings, a man of fifty-nine, known chiefly as a boon companion of the Prince Regent, and as a reckless spendthrift; but he possessed gifts both for war and statesmanship which made him a worthy successor of Warren Hastings and the Marquis Wellesley. His first task was to deal with the aggressions of the Gurkhas of Nipal. It took three campaigns among the high Himalayas to compel these doughty warriors to sue for peace. But in 1816 they made a treaty which has never since been broken, and became staunch allies of the British power. The kingdom of Nipal ceded the mountain district of Kumaon, but retained its independence; and from that day to this the gallant Gurkhas have supplied willing recruits to fight under the British flag in many hard-fought wars.

The Gurkha war had just been ended (1816) when a Pindari raid took place on so large a scale and of so outrageous a character that even the Directors were shaken out of their lethargy, and forced to recognise that this pest must be firmly dealt with.<sup>1</sup> A band burst into Guntur in the distant province of Madras, a British district which had enjoyed unbroken peace for fifty years; and in twelve days plundered 339 villages, murdered 182 people with hideous tortures, and wounded or tortured 4000 more. This brought clearly home what had been going on in territories beyond the British limits; and Hastings succeeded, to his infinite satisfaction, in getting permission to crush out the Pindari bands once and for all, and to give the boon of peace to the harassed peoples of Central India.

His instructions were to avoid, if possible, a war with the Mahratta princes, the protectors of these murderous raiders; and he did his best to secure their quiescence, and, if possible, their co-operation. The Peshwa of Poona, head of the Mahratta confederacy, might be kept quiet by the influence of the British Resident at his court, and (still more) by the presence of a British subsidiary force at Poona. Bhonsla, the master of Nagpur, was persuaded to sign a treaty of alliance; Sindhia, the most powerful of the group, was reluctantly persuaded to promise his help. But Hastings did not trust Mahratta promises. He organised two great armies, the largest yet put in the field in India, which were to converge from the north and the south upon the fast-

<sup>1</sup> For what follows, see the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

nesses of the Pindaris in the Narbada Valley, and also to prevent the Mahratta chieftains from moving.

It was well that he took these precautions. For the Mahratta chiefs could not resist the temptation to use the opportunity of striking a blow for independence or supremacy. The Peshwa made a sudden treacherous attack upon the Resident at Poona (1817), but his 25,000 men were ignominiously defeated by a British force of less than 3000 on the field of Kirki, just outside the Mahratta capital, and finally overthrown at Ashti in 1818. Bhonsla, disregarding his recent pledges, made a similar attack upon the Residency at Nagpur (1817), but was beaten off and defeated at Sitabaldi by a force less than one-tenth as strong as his own. Sindhia remained quiet, but only because he was overawed by large forces which dominated his fortresses. The armies of Holkar (himself a minor) were put into the field to help the Pindaris, and beaten in the biggest battle of the war, at Mahidpur. Meanwhile the Pindari bands had been destroyed; and India was relieved of a nightmare.

These decisive victories enabled Lord Hastings to carry out a settlement of all that part of India which had not yet been definitely brought under British supremacy, as far as the line of the Sutlej and the Indus.<sup>1</sup> The treacherous Peshwa was deposed, and his lands went to form the modern Presidency of Bombay; he was pensioned off, and went to live near Cawnpore, where he adopted a son who afterwards won infamy as the Nana Sahib. The other Mahratta princes were allowed to retain their thrones; but they lost some territory, and they were compelled to abandon all claims of supremacy or tribute over the lesser princes who had so long suffered from their tyranny, and to accept treaties whereby they definitely admitted the supremacy of the British power. Finally treaties were made with the numerous princes of Rajputana and Central India, whereby they all willingly accepted British supremacy, and, in return for protection, undertook never to wage war without the consent of the suzerain power.

In effect the long process of conquest was completed by these events. Henceforward unbroken peace, such as in all her history India had never known, reigned over all the vast regions from the Indus to Cape Comorin. The long centuries of anarchy and turmoil were at an end. India had become a single realm, all but the valley of the Indus; and that was to be brought under the *Pax Britannica* during the next generation.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.



The period of conquest which had been forced on by the results of non-intervention did not end with the defeat of the Gurkhas and the overthrow of the Mahrattas. After Lord Hastings had left India in 1823, his successor Lord Amherst was drawn into conflict with Burma, a land quite distinct from India, geographically and racially. Two successive Burmese kings had been extending their power on all hands since 1782. They had annexed the coastal district of Arakan, which lay next to Bengal, and Arakanese refugees, pouring over the border, had stirred up a good deal of trouble. In 1821 the Burmese conquered Assam, a province closely united with Bengal, and Indian in character. Embassies from Calcutta tried in vain to establish friendly relations; they were always treated with studied insolence. The Burmese avowed the intention of conquering Bengal and Calcutta, and had intrigued with the Mahrattas. In 1823, intoxicated with success, they began an attack upon Bengal. They had to be taught a lesson, and Lord Amherst undertook an expedition against them. It was ill-managed, and dragged on through three campaigns. But the Burmese armies had to admit defeat, and their King was forced to cede the province of Assam, and the two long coastal strips of Arakan and Tenasserim.<sup>1</sup> (Treaty of Yandabo, 1826.)

These acquisitions brought the British power beyond the limits of India, into what came to be known as Further India: Tenasserim made it a neighbour of Siam and the Malay Peninsula. In this region British influence had already been established since the acquisition of Penang in 1782. When the Dutch possessions were conquered during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, it had appeared as if British power were about to become preponderant in this region also. That expectation was disappointed by the restoration of the Dutch possessions in 1816, under the terms of the Treaty of Vienna. But Sir Stamford Raffles, who had brilliantly administered Java during the British occupation, was resolved to retain a foothold in these waters. In 1819 he negotiated with the Sultan of Johore for the island of Singapore, which, situated on the very highway of the trade-route to China, was destined to become one of the greatest of the world's ports. Five years later (1824) a fresh agreement was made with the Dutch. The East India Company withdrew from Sumatra, where they had long maintained a trading station, and undertook to abstain from interference in that island. In return the Dutch restored the port of

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

Malacca, in the Straits, and undertook not to interfere in the Malay Peninsula. In effect, from this date, the Malay States passed under a British protectorate, though this was not formally recognised till much later ; and the importance of this development was recognised, in 1826, by the organisation of the Straits Settlements as a separate Presidency under the Governor-General of Bengal. They remained in this position until they were turned into a distinct Crown Colony in 1867.

#### § 4. *New Principles of Government in India.*

If this period was important in regard to the consolidation of British power in the East, it was still more important in that it saw the adoption of a new point of view in regard to the problems of Indian government. Perhaps it would be more just to say that there was a return to the principles of Warren Hastings, the wisest of all British rulers in India. For Warren Hastings had always respected Indian laws and usages, and had done his best to study and understand them, and to adapt them to the needs of the new régime ; he had held that the British Empire in India should be governed as an Indian Power, and, so far as possible, through Indian agency.

The immense acquisitions of territory which had been made first by Wellesley and then by the Marquis of Hastings called for great labours of organisation. To meet this need there appeared perhaps the most remarkable group of scholar-statesmen who have ever honoured the British Government in India by their service. Among them were James Tod, long Resident in Rajputana, whose fascinating *Annals of Rajasthan* is the classic history of the Rajput princes ; James Grant-Duff, who placed the history of the Mahrattas on firm foundations while working among them ; Brian Houghton Hodgson, who first seriously explored the literature of Buddhism while serving as Resident in Nipal ; H. H. Wilson and James Prinsep, who were among the founders of the Western study of Sanskrit literature.

But the great glory of the period was to be found in the work of four statesmen of a high order, Sir Thomas Munro, who reorganised the corrupt province of Madras ; Charles Metcalfe, who settled much of the North-West Provinces, acquired by Wellesley ; Sir John Malcolm, soldier, administrator and historian ; and Mountstuart Elphinstone, perhaps the greatest of the group, who was responsible for the organisation of the Peshwa's territories, and the Presidency

of Bombay. All these men brought to their great tasks a profound interest in and respect for the history and traditions of India. They strove to preserve and strengthen whatever was sound in Indian usage, and to work in comradeship with Indians.

They necessarily had to undertake, in the newly acquired provinces, the organisation of the land-revenue system, on which the whole structure of Indian government rested. And with one accord, though they acted independently, they broke away from the system of Permanent Settlement which had been advocated by Francis, and established in Bengal by Cornwallis.<sup>1</sup> Their systems varied, and this is not the place for any attempt to analyse the complexities of Indian land-systems. But, like Warren Hastings before them, they tried to base their work upon Indian usages, instead of endeavouring to assimilate the Indian land-system to that of England. They saw also (especially Elphinstone) the value of the Indian system of village self-government, which the Permanent Settlement had almost destroyed in Bengal.

But while, in this and other ways, this remarkable generation of administrators respected Indian usages and tradition, they were not blind to the need of introducing the invigorating force of western ideas into Indian life. In 1824, at a time when high reaction was reigning in Europe and was only beginning to be qualified in Britain, Sir Thomas Munro could urge the necessity of giving Indians 'a higher opinion of themselves, by placing more confidence in them . . . and rendering them eligible to almost every office.' This was a return to the methods of Warren Hastings, and a departure from those of his successors, who had laid it down that Indians must not be admitted to positions of responsibility. 'We should look upon India,' Munro wrote, 'not as a temporary possession, but as one which is to be maintained permanently, until the natives shall have abandoned most of their prejudices, and become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular government for themselves, and to conduct and preserve it.'

For a period of almost world-wide reaction, these are words of a singular enlightenment. They meant that, in the judgment of some of the ablest of its servants, the British power in India ought not to be a mere dominion, maintained for dominion's sake, but ought to be a means of serving and training the teeming millions whom fate had brought under its influence. The gifts of peace and justice, which were

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. vii. chap. xi. p. 142.

accruing to India from the establishment of British supremacy were great gifts ; but they were not enough. They must be reinforced by the vitalising influence of new ideas, capable of stirring an ancient and noble civilisation out of its long stagnation.

The stirring was to come from the introduction of western learning ; and it was in this period that the Indian peoples, especially in Bengal, began to be introduced to the science and criticism of the West. The work was begun by the English missionaries, who had made their way into India, for the first time, at the end of the eighteenth century. Their advent was at first regarded with some distrust by Government ; and the first missionaries in Bengal, Carey, Marshman, and Ward, had to betake themselves to the Danish settlement at Serampore in order to escape from Government restraints. It was the missionaries who first introduced the printing-press for the dissemination of vernacular literature. It was the missionaries who opened the first schools of western learning and began the teaching of English as the key to modern knowledge. The innovation was regarded with distrust by some of the most enlightened British officials, partly because they feared the unsettling effects of missionary activity and of the acrimony which it might arouse, partly because they held that India should develop her own great tradition of learning instead of borrowing slavishly from the West. For this reason, when, in 1813, Government made its first grant for educational purposes, the money was for a time left unspent, and then devoted wholly to oriental learning. But there were some progressive Indians who did not share these misgivings. In 1819 a brave Brahmin, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, who had, at great sacrifice, broken away from the rigid rules of caste and convinced himself that the awakening of India could only come by way of western science, joined hands with some Englishmen to found a school of western learning in Calcutta free from missionary or sectarian influence. The first particles of leaven had been introduced into the mass ; and the powerful working of this leaven was to be, for a century to come, a more momentous factor in the transformation of India than all the wars and laws and policies with which we shall be concerned in later chapters.

[Egerton, *British Colonial Policy* ; Dorman, *History of the British Empire in the Nineteenth Century* ; Kingsford, *History of Canada* ; Rusden, *History of Australia* ; Muir, *Making of British India* ; Roberts, *Historical Geography of India* ; Hastings, *Private Diary* ; Malcolm, *Political History of India* ; Gleig, *Life of Munro* ; Arbuthnot, *Munro's Minutes* ; Forrest, *Select Writings of Elphinstone*.]

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRIUMPH OF INDUSTRIALISM

(A.D. 1815-1851)

#### § I. *The Transformation of Industry.*

FAR-REACHING changes had taken place in British industry before and during the Great War. But it was in the generation after the peace that the new methods captured most of the great industries, and affected most deeply, for good or for ill, the life of the whole nation.

The essence of the Industrial Revolution was the adoption of large-scale production, by means of power-driven machinery in great factories, which could only be established and maintained by a large expenditure of capital, and only worked by organised gangs of wage-earning 'hands.' Before 1815 these methods had fully conquered only one great industry, that of spinning in cotton and (less completely) in wool. During the generation following 1815 they rapidly took possession of one great industry after another; and in all the great industries their victory was complete by 1851, when the Great Exhibition proclaimed to the world the triumph of British industry. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the expenditure of energy, industry and inventiveness which brought about these results. We cannot here follow the process in detail, or tell the story of the myriad inventions which made these results possible. We must limit ourselves to considering the nature of the change in a few of the principal industries.

It was in the textile industries that the revolution had started. But in the weaving branch of these industries its progress was slow. Before 1815 the power-loom had only been applied to the coarser kinds of cotton stuffs which could be easily standardised; in the weaving of more delicate and complex fabrics the hand-loom weaver still held his own, though his rates of pay were being beaten down by the standards of cheapness set by power-loom production. The hand-loom weavers carried on their desperate struggle down to the 'forties and even later, especially in the woollen trade.

But their defeat was inevitable. It was ensured by a succession of ingenious inventions—notably the French invention of the Jacquard loom—which made it possible to weave the most complex patterns on machines. By 1851 the triumph of the machines and of the factories was all but complete in all the weaving industries, cotton, woollen, linen and silk.

In some aspects the change was, no doubt, a change for the worse. It meant that there was less of individual craftsmanship, and that (in theory at any rate) the workman was less his own master. But in practice the hand-loom weaver had long worked for capitalist employers. And there were unquestionable compensations. The big factory provided better conditions of labour than the small home-workshops; it could also be more easily regulated and supervised, and, as we shall see,<sup>1</sup> the State was in this period undertaking the duty of supervision, which it had never been able to exercise in the era of domestic manufacture. Moreover the work-people, when grouped in factories, found it far easier to organise themselves for mutual protection; the Trade Union movement has always thriven most in those industries which are organised for large-scale production. Even on the social side, therefore, the change was not all loss; on the economic side it meant a colossal increase in the amount of wealth produced and available for use by the community.

In the metal industries the change was as great as in the textiles. Before 1815 most of the hardware trades that centred in Sheffield and Birmingham had been mainly carried on in very small workshops; to some extent that is still the case. Large-scale production was steadily extending its range in this sphere after 1815. But, more important, a practically new industry based upon the use of iron was springing into first-rate importance. The demand for the numerous and complex machines employed in all the industries, and for the engines to supply power for working them, was creating the immense industry of engineering, which was necessarily carried on from the first in large establishments, and demanded the employment of substantial capital. After 1825, when the export of machinery was first permitted by law, the expansion of the engineering industry became very rapid, for all the world wanted to buy British machines. Engineering was thus coming into its own, as the key-industry of the modern world, which lives by machinery.

<sup>1</sup> Below, Chap. viii. p. 394 ff.

All this involved an immense increase in the use of iron, and therefore in iron-mining, in smelting and in the manufacture of steel—processes which could only be carried on upon a great scale. And the increase in the output of coal was yet more striking than the increase in the production of iron; for all the new industries, and the iron industries most of all, depended absolutely upon coal, while the demand for it was further increased by the fact that the use of coal-gas as an illuminant, just beginning in 1815, had become *practically universal in every important centre of population before 1851*. It was during this generation that coal became the essential foundation of the whole industrial life of Britain.

It was these rapidly expanding industries which at once brought about, and gave employment to, the rapidly growing population of Britain. For in the first generation after the peace population was growing even more swiftly than in the previous generation; the population of England and Wales alone, in spite of increasing emigration, grew from 10,000,000 in 1811 to 18,000,000 in 1851; and practically the whole of this increase was to be found either in London or on the great coal-fields where the new industries were concentrated, and where towns were springing up like mushrooms.

Agriculture accounted for very little of the increase; for in spite of all that the dominant landowning class could do, by means of Corn Laws and in other ways, British agriculture was passing through a period of depression. Yet even in agriculture the tendency towards large-scale production under capitalist direction was very marked. The very depression of the period helped the process. For the farmer only held his own by making use of labour-saving appliances and new chemical methods of fertilisation; the *first introduction of these devices belongs to this time*. And as only the man with capital could use these methods, the crushing out of the small man went on more rapidly than ever. In 1842 and in 1845 General Enclosure Acts were passed, which provided cheap and easy means of bringing under enclosure the parishes which had hitherto succeeded in resisting the process. It was in this generation that the process, begun in the eighteenth century, was completed, whereby the soil of Britain passed into the hands of a small number of great landowners, while the work of cultivation was almost everywhere conducted by farmers owning capital, and the labourers on the soil were divorced

from direct interest in the result of their labours. It was in this generation that the English peasantry, after one last despairing outbreak of revolt, settled down into that stagnation which has since marked them.

It had now become unmistakably plain that the wealth and strength of Britain depended upon her manufacturing industries and her foreign commerce, not upon her agriculture. The agricultural interest itself had obviously become largely dependent upon the industrial interests. Landlords drew compensation for the reduction of agricultural rents in the vastly increased revenues which they derived from mining royalties and from the sale or lease of the land on which the new urban population was growing up. The most thriving farmers were those who were within easy reach of the town markets. On the other hand the industrialists were not, or did not think themselves, dependent upon British agriculture. If only artificial restrictions on the import of corn could be got rid of, they believed that they could buy abroad, with the products of their looms and forges, all the food they needed. British agriculture might go to utter ruin, and still, it would seem, British wealth would continue to increase. And in face of these facts the political predominance which the landowning interest still retained, down to and even after 1832, seemed more unreasonable than ever, and conflict between the old order and the new was inevitable.

### § 2. *The Introduction of New Methods of Transport.*

There was one thing which agriculture and industry had in common. Both depended for their prosperity upon the development of more efficient methods of transport. The new centres of population could not have existed if they had been compelled to depend upon the slow and expensive transport methods of the eighteenth century; they could not have been fed, still less could they have brought to market the weighty and bulky products of their factories. The invention of new facilities for transport was perhaps the greatest material achievement of this astonishing period.

We have seen<sup>1</sup> how the first advance of the Industrial Revolution had been made possible by improvements in roads and waterways, the old traditional modes of locomotion which men had used since the beginning of time. In 1815 it was still upon these devices that the best brains

<sup>1</sup> Above, pp. 122-3.



in civil engineering were at work. The canal system was almost completed; tens of thousands of 'navvies' had been at work upon it for two generations. And now the road system of Britain was being re-made by a series of engineers of whom Telford was the greatest. New methods of road-making gave a hard and firm surface such as the old roads had never possessed. On these beautiful roads it was possible to carry loads which would have been unthinkable a generation earlier; while stage-coaches, travelling ten miles an hour, were making passenger traffic easier than it had ever been.

But already mechanical power, which had transformed industry, was beginning to be applied to transport. In 1812 the first steamboat, the *Comet*, had appeared on the Clyde. Within a few years steamboats were being used freely for coasting traffic, and in 1840 the first regular transatlantic service was started. But it was only very gradually that steam ousted sails from sea-going traffic, because so great a part of the cargo-space in steamships had to be given up to coals; and for this reason mechanical transport by land, though it began later, succeeded far more quickly than mechanical transport by sea.

In the endeavour to find means of dealing with the transport problem on land, inventive men had long been at work upon two distinct ideas, on the one hand the use of steam-power for traction by road, and on the other hand the use of steel rails, laid on a level track, whereon even the horse could draw loads far greater than would be possible under ordinary conditions. The combination of these two ideas produced the railway. In 1825 a railway between Stockton and Darlington was opened, and at once a score of railway projects were set on foot. In 1830 a railway between Liverpool and Manchester was completed, and the success of the engine designed by George Stephenson, the engineer of the Stockton-Darlington line, convinced the trading world that the solution of the problem had been found.

It was applied with an amazing energy. Many railway companies were organised. By 1837 the main features of the modern railway system were already blocked out. By 1843 over 1800 miles of railway track were opened; by 1851 the figure had risen to 6500. All over the country armies of 'navvies' were at work, scoring the land with embankments, cuttings and tunnels; there were nearly 200,000 of them employed towards the end of the period. It is impossible not to admire the fierce energy of this achievement,

by which 6000 miles of railway were built in twenty years. Sentimentalists bemoaned it; superior persons sneered at it, and said 'I told you so' when a commercial panic followed the wild speculation which resulted from the railway mania; Oxford dons, Eton masters and solemn territorial magnates put obstacles in the way, and insisted that the vile thing should be kept aloof from them. But the steel rails were riveting the new social order upon the land of Britain. They were linking up the parts of the industrial system into an organised whole. They were turning Britain into a smaller and a more closely united community. They were making the population mobile. They were bringing home to every observing mind the dependence of the new social order upon mechanism.

The railway system was brought into existence in a haphazard, unregulated way, by a multitude of separate companies, often at cross-purposes and fiercely competitive. There were some who held that the development of this vitally important system of national communications ought to be undertaken by the State, or at least in accordance with an orderly plan devised by the State. Gladstone was one of these: as President of the Board of Trade, in 1844, he definitely anticipated the acquisition of the railways by the State, and provided for it. But this was, in fact, impracticable. The new order had come upon the country with such swiftness that it was in being before men had fully realised its significance or the range of its influence.

### § 3. *The Supply and Organisation of Capital.*

No one can reflect upon the enormous and febrile activities of these years without asking himself, Whence came the immense resources in wealth which were necessary for carrying them out? Who found the means for the erection of all the great factories, the construction of the innumerable and costly machines, the payment of all the armies of navvies who were laying out thousands of miles of railway? And these questions become still more challenging when it is remembered that during the same period British wealth was developing the resources of the new colonies, starting land-companies and paying the expenses of emigrants during the period when they had not begun to support themselves; and that, at the same time, it was to Britain that foreign Governments turned for loans, because London had become the financial capital of the world, the apparently inex-

haustible source from which wealth could be drawn for all sorts of purposes.

There is only one explanation of these facts. It is that the British people were not consuming all the wealth which they were creating, but were laying aside a very high proportion of it to be used as 'capital' for the creation of new wealth. It was this fact, and this alone, which rendered possible the incessant increase of wealth-production, the working out of new devices, the opening up of new countries. Britain was making new wealth with accumulating rapidity on the tacit condition that she should not spend or use more of it than was necessary, but should put it aside for reproductive purposes, just as the farmer who wants to increase his crops must put aside a larger proportion of each year's yield for seed.

So far as the major portion of the British peoples was concerned this abstinence or thrift was involuntary. The great labouring mass spent little because it got but a small proportion of the product to spend. In the growing middle class of professional men, distributive agents and managers, the habit of thrift was voluntary and deeply rooted, and it was greatly stimulated during this period by improved facilities for investment. Saving for investment had become an almost universal practice among the middle classes, and it was from this source that a large proportion of the capital required for railway construction and other purposes was drawn. Among the wealthy classes—the landowners and the organisers of the great industries to whom the name of 'capitalists' is (rather loosely) commonly applied—the wholesale creation of new capital was encouraged by three facts:—many of them had incomes so large that they could not spend them; the habit of personal ostentation was (in the manufacturing classes) restrained by social usage, and by the prevalence of the idea that a man's value was to be measured by the amount of his accumulated wealth; and the fascination of industrial enterprise and the pride of power formed with many of the ablest a yet stronger motive. These motives did not affect the landowning classes as powerfully as they affected the industrial classes, because the landowning classes had inherited a tradition of splendour of life which was reflected in the great palaces they had scattered over the face of the country, and because they had a wider range of tastes and interests than the new manufacturing class. It was therefore mainly the men of this class who created and controlled the immense body of new

capital by whose means the world was being remodelled. And this fact increased their resentment against the landowners' ascendancy in the political sphere.

Amongst the most important advances of the period was the development of means for 'canalising' the nation's unspent wealth, and making the savings of all available for the maintenance and expansion of industry. Two things especially contributed to this end, the use of joint-stock companies and the rapid development of banking. Both took enormous strides during this generation, and both stimulated the growth of the habit of saving and investment.

All the railways, gas undertakings and other public utilities were organised as 'Public Companies,' established by Act of Parliament. This fact gave confidence to investors, and these companies from the first largely drew their capital from a multitude of small investors. But there was also a rapid increase in the number of 'Private Companies,' which began to be used for the organisation of industrial enterprises too big for the individual capitalist. The Eighteenth Century had looked askance at this form of organisation, because it was held that there ought to be one man or a small group who could be held directly responsible in every industrial undertaking; and trading joint-stock companies had been practically prohibited by the 'Bubble Company' Act of 1719. It was only in 1825 that this Act was repealed, though it had long been almost a dead letter. But investment in trading concerns was discouraged by the fact that the shareholder was regarded by the law as a partner in the concern, responsible in all his property for its undertakings, in spite of the fact that he could have no effective voice in controlling its operations. Investors were therefore inclined to be shy of industrial concerns until in 1837 an Act permitted the formation of Limited Liability Companies, in which the investor risked only the amount of his investment.

The development of the banking system was even more important as a means of stimulating industry than the growth of joint-stock companies; for when men acquired the habit of depositing their money in banks instead of keeping it in strong-boxes, the bankers could keep it constantly employed in making advances to traders. When the period opened there were already some hundreds of banks in England. But they were all, except the Bank of England, small private banks, whose proprietors often had not enough capital to give adequate security to their customers. The creation of joint-stock banks was prohibited

by law, in order to prevent any rivalry with the Bank of England. In 1826 Huskisson removed the prohibition from districts more than sixty-five miles from London, and in 1833 this limitation was withdrawn. The result was that joint-stock banks, backed by adequate capital, grew up in large numbers, and the whole of the richer and middle classes quickly acquired the habit of depositing their money with the banks. The average amount of deposits in the banks rose until it reached almost £300,000,000 in 1851. And most of this was available for advances to industry. In a very large degree the rapid progress of British industry during this period was due to the increase of banking facilities.

The development of joint-stock companies and the growth of the banking system between them secured that almost the whole of the unconsumed wealth of Britain was constantly available for use, instead of being locked up in unproductive forms. Capital became more and more fluid and easily handled, and this made vast enterprises possible which in any earlier age would have been out of the question.

Thus the two great factors which have rendered possible the gigantic undertakings of the modern world, engineering skill and freely disposable capital, were simultaneously being brought into operation. And because this had happened in Britain before it happened in any other country, Britain became for a time not only the world's workshop, but the world's financial centre; and it was mainly in London that the levers were worked by which the processes of trade and industry throughout the world were regulated. It was to London that foreign Governments turned when they wanted to float loans; and bills on London were becoming the means whereby commercial transactions in all parts of the world were carried on. Moreover, it was mainly through London, and the delicate and flexible machinery of finance which London controlled, that the means were found for rapidly opening up and developing the new countries of the world, for bringing the surplus population to the fields which awaited their labour, for equipping these lands with railways and other modern facilities, and for organising the marketing of their products.

#### § 4. *The Paradox of Popular Distress.*

In the country which was displaying all this boundless energy and fertility of resource, and which was heaping up this colossal pyramid of wealth and economic power, a very

large proportion of the population—now multiplying at a pace hitherto unparalleled in history—were suffering from distresses such as their ancestors had never known. Tens of thousands of them were annually pouring out of the country in the hope of finding happier homes elsewhere; and those who remained seemed, throughout this generation, to be always on the verge of violent revolt. Here is a paradox which needs to be explained; and the best minds of that generation were much exercised by the attempt to explain it.

Some took refuge in mere fatalism. These distresses, they held, were the inevitable price that had to be paid for progress; 'the poor ye have always with you'; 'population always presses hard on the means of subsistence.' Others, with an optimism almost as deadening as this fatalism, held that these evils were the necessary result of a rapid transition, but that they would disappear if only the economic forces which were transforming society were allowed free play, and emancipated from outworn restrictions and from the well-meaning but mischievous meddlings of Government. Yet others, distressed by the spectacles of ugliness and cruelty which surrounded them, contented themselves with reviling the whole process which had brought about such results, with denouncing mechanism and the 'cash nexus,' and with praying vaguely but fervently for the coming of some kingly man who should, in some undefined way, lead the people back into happiness. The most intelligent among the labouring and suffering mass were convinced that the whole system of society was fundamentally awry, and must be completely reconstructed; and, indeed, it was obvious to the point of platitude that there was something radically wrong in an order of things in which the creation of immense wealth was not bringing well-being to those whose labour created it. But the revolutionary leaders whose guidance the working-class was accepting during this period were too often content merely to revile the greed of 'capitalists,' not realising that the moral condemnation of a whole class is always unhelpful. They did not suggest how the needful capital could be set aside if the existing methods were abandoned. They demanded vaguely that Society should be reconstructed, but had no clear plans for reconstruction.

Indubitably the wealth which the British nation was creating was not justly divided among its members. If it *had* been justly divided, it is certain that nearly all of it would have been consumed as fast as it was created; there

would have been little or no capital available for expansion, and therefore no increase in the divisible wealth. This is not a justification of injustice ; it is the statement of a hard fact, which had to be recognised. The rapid increase of British wealth was perhaps unhealthy. But it was due to the immense scale on which new capital was created, and this in its turn was partly due to the inequality of distribution.

Why was the distribution so grossly unequal ? Why was so great an increase of wealth accompanied by so much suffering ? The causes were manifold, and not simple or easily removed. There was a tradition of low wages and of a low standard of life, which descended from the Great War, and was maintained by the ruinous influence of the Poor Law system ; and this influence was not overcome until some time after the new Poor Law had been enacted in 1834. The extraordinary increase of population, in conjunction with the incessant invention of new labour-saving devices, meant that there was always a surplus of labour which kept wages low. Combination among the workpeople for collective bargaining (which was the only available remedy for these conditions) was prohibited by law until 1825 ; after 1825, and until 1848, the power of industrial combination was mainly used to forward vague and visionary schemes of wholesale revolution, and it was not until the next period that the Trade Unions settled solidly down to win improved conditions in one trade after another. The very swiftness with which the economic change was taking place necessarily involved acute suffering. It is hard to see by what means the agonies of the hand-loom weavers, for example, could have been mitigated during the period when their trade was being destroyed by the competition of the machines. No device could have done more than prolong the agony, like stimulants administered to a dying man. And finally, the new economic order was subject to oscillations, to cycles of good and bad trade, unlike anything that had earlier been known. Men had not seriously begun to study or understand this cyclical movement of trade, and until that was done no effective measures could be taken to guard against the recurrent periods of distress and unemployment.

All these considerations help to account for the cruel paradox of the juxtaposition of misery with increasing wealth. But they could not justify the acceptance of such conditions, as part of the order of nature ; rather they formed a challenge to the wisdom and humanity of the whole com-

munity—a challenge which had to be taken up, if the British people were to regain social health and freedom. We shall see that the challenge was not disregarded, though the finding of the true remedies was to prove a slow and toilsome task.

[Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*; Marshall, *Industry and Trade*; Cunningham, *Growth of English Industry and Commerce*; Porter, *Progress of the Nation*; Smiles, *Lives of the Engineers*; Taylor, *Factory System*; Chapman, *Lancashire Cotton Industry*; Buxton, *Finance and Politics*]



## CHAPTER VI

### EUROPE IN REVOLUTION

(A.D. 1830-1850)

#### § 1. *Britain and the Continent.*

IN 1830 Britain and Europe suddenly and simultaneously entered upon a new political era. Britain overthrew the Tory oligarchy, and embarked upon twenty years of strenuous reconstructive work, national and imperial. Europe revolted against Metternich's repressive system, and passed into a period of violent and largely futile revolutions. In many ways the European revolutions affected the British reconstruction; they also influenced deeply the relations between Britain and her neighbours, and the direction of British foreign policy; they formed a very significant background to the reforming activity which we shall survey in the following chapters.

Since 1815 the reactionary Powers, led by Metternich, had succeeded in keeping Europe in the strait waistcoat of the Vienna settlement, and in repressing the liberal and nationalist movements which menaced its stability. But these movements were by no means quelled; they were growing stronger year by year; and they were now to show their potency in two revolutionary outbursts, the first of which, in 1830, affected a great part of Europe, achieved definite results in two countries, and brought about the first serious breaches in the settlement of 1815; while the second, in 1848, seemed for a moment to have brought down the whole system of absolutism in ruins, everywhere outside Russia. The interval between these outbreaks was disturbed by acute diplomatic controversies; while, underground, revolutionary agitation went on without a pause.

On the surface there was a remarkable correspondence between the course of events on the Continent and the course of events in Britain. The Tory ascendancy in Britain from 1815 to 1830 ran parallel with the ascendancy of the Metternich system on the Continent. The European revolutions of 1830 took place at the same moment as the fall of the

Tories. The revolutionary agitation which was at work in Europe between 1830 and 1848 had its parallel in the working-class agitations, especially the Chartist movement, which were at work in Britain. And the European revolutions of 1848 synchronised with the final demonstration of the Chartists.

But the resemblances between Britain and the Continent were less significant than the differences. Even the years 1815-1822 saw no such silencing of discussion in Britain as took place on the Continent; and there was no continental parallel to the useful reforms of the younger Tories between 1822 and 1830. The British revolution of 1830-32 was effected by constitutional means, and (apart from a little rioting) without violence; whilst its results were permanent, and were loyally accepted by the defeated party. Unlike the revolutionary agitation on the Continent, the Chartist movement in Britain was not driven underground by any suppression of speech or writing, but was carried on openly and publicly, as a national debate. And the result was that when in 1848 soldiers were out and barricades were up in the streets of most of the capitals of Europe, all that happened in Britain was a big public meeting and the passage of three cabs through the streets of London with a petition to Parliament. The contrast between the results attained was even more striking than the contrast between the methods of discussion pursued on the Continent and in the Islands. For while the wars and tumults of Europe seemed to lead to very little definite result, in Britain there had been achieved, by 1850, a real transformation of the political and social order.

This led to a great increase in the prestige of Britain. Her institutions appeared to possess a stability and an elasticity which became the envy of other peoples. They had already shown their stability during the long wars. Now, at a time when fevered violence reigned everywhere else, they showed not only stability but a capacity for orderly and considered progress which gave far better results than violence was able to obtain anywhere else. British institutions therefore became the model upon which most of the European States reconstructed their systems during the years following 1850.

## § 2. *The Revolutions of 1830.*

The signal for the revolutions of 1830 was given by France, the acknowledged torch-bearer of revolution. Charles X.,

the second of the restored Bourbon kings, unwilling to submit to the restraints of the parliamentary régime which had been established by charter in 1814, issued a series of Ordinances (July 1830) which overrode some vital provisions of the charter. Thereupon a sudden revolt flamed up in Paris; barricades were raised in the narrow streets; in four days the resistance of Government collapsed; and Charles x. fled to Britain, the refuge equally of exiled monarchs and of banished agitators. In his place Louis Philippe, head of the Orleanist branch of the Bourbon line, was raised to the throne by a parliamentary vote. The leaders of this swift and peaceful revolution prided themselves upon the closeness with which they had followed the British model of 1689; they made the minimum of change, but they substituted for a divine-right king a king dependent upon Parliament. France had become a liberal State.

The revolution of July gave an immediate stimulus to revolutionary outbreaks in Belgium, Poland, Italy and Germany. But it also had important effects in Britain. It took place at the moment of the critical parliamentary election of 1830; and the quietness with which it was effected, and the moderation with which it was used, showed that constitutional change need not necessarily be followed by September Massacres and Reigns of Terror, and thus destroyed a bugbear which had long been an obstacle to reform. The Whig victory in the election of 1830 was partly due to the events in France. Moreover the Whig Government in Britain hastened to make friends with the new Government in France, and for the next ten years the *entente* between the two liberal Powers of the West was one of the determining factors in the politics of Europe. Lord Palmerston, the Whig Foreign Secretary, was a disciple of Canning, and, like Canning, he hated the Metternich system. But Palmerston went further than Canning. He adopted with zest the policy of giving support to both liberal and nationalist movements; and the *entente* with France greatly strengthened his hands.

The first test of the value of the *entente* was afforded by the Belgian revolution, which broke out as soon as the signal of revolt was given in Paris. Belgian national feeling was united in opposition to the subordination to Holland which had been imposed upon Belgium by the Treaty of Vienna. Encouraged by the success of the revolution in France, the Belgians suddenly broke into revolt, declared their independence, and set up a parliamentary system modelled on

that of Britain. The authority of the Dutch Government collapsed. But if the League of Powers to preserve the Vienna settlement had been intact, the Belgians would not have been able to make good their independence. As it was, France and Britain united in supporting them, while Austria and Russia were occupied by revolts in Italy and Poland. The problem was discussed at a conference at London, and the Eastern Powers reluctantly consented (1831) to recognise the independence of Belgium, with the proviso (which was meant as a safeguard against French aggression) that Belgium should be made a permanently neutral State like Switzerland, under the conjoint guarantee of the Great Powers. The King of Holland would not for some years accept this settlement, claiming the inviolable Treaty of Vienna as his warranty, and a French army and a British fleet had to be put in motion ere he would submit. But in 1839 the settlement of 1831 was, with slight modifications, confirmed. The first great breach in the Vienna settlement had been made; and it had been made by the co-operation of France and Britain.

There were revolutionary movements also in Italy, Germany and Poland; but here the Western Powers could not intervene, and the movements failed. In Poland, indeed, Tsar Nicholas seized upon the excuse to suppress the Polish system of government, which had been guaranteed by the Treaty of Vienna; and thus a second breach was made in that sacrosanct document. But the Belgian breach, made under the protection of the Western Powers, was a change in the direction of liberalism; the Polish breach, made by an agreement among the Eastern Powers, was a change in the direction of absolutism. Henceforward exiled Poles became the fanatical advocates of revolution in every European country.

Indeed, the chief results of the revolutions of 1830 and 1831 was the definite breakdown of the combination of Europe to maintain the sanctity of the settlement of 1815. The great League of Powers of 1815 was broken into two sharply contrasted groups: the two Western Powers were the proclaimed friends of liberal and nationalist causes; the three Eastern Powers were their declared enemies.

The leaders of the two groups were Britain and Russia, which now stood forth in a marked rivalry that was to last throughout the nineteenth century. Tsar Nicholas I., master of the vast landlocked Russian Empire, was a more stern and unbending defender of absolutism than Metternich him-

self. Lord Palmerston, who controlled British foreign policy during the greater part of the next period, was a restless and self-confident man, eager to have a finger in every pie, and ready to encourage every liberal movement on the Continent, though he was quite indifferent to reform movements at home; and the monarchs of Europe learnt to regard him with fear and distaste, as the fomenter of unrest. The general rivalry of Russia and Britain was made more acute by Russia's steady advance in Central Asia, where her progress aroused the alarm of the Government of India; while in Europe Nicholas was bent upon fulfilling the ancient ambition of Russia, by establishing his ascendancy over the Turkish Empire. So acute did the rivalry become between the continental despotism and the oceanic commonwealth that the diplomatic history of the next five-and-twenty years has been described as a long duel between Palmerston and Nicholas, the one representing liberalism, the other autocracy. That is an exaggerated way of stating the case, but it is not without an element of truth.

### § 3. *The Eastern Question in a New Phase.*

During the half-century from 1830 to 1880 the subject on which the rivalry of Britain and Russia was most constantly displayed was the Eastern Question, the problem of the future of the Turkish Empire. Except for a moment under Pitt,<sup>1</sup> Britain had never taken any deep interest in the Turkish problem. Now, under the impulse of her fear of Russia, she came to regard the maintenance of the independence and integrity of the Turkish Empire as a vital British interest, almost the main principle of her foreign policy. This policy was enthusiastically adopted by Palmerston, and was maintained by all his successors, of both parties, until Gladstone broke away from it in 1878; and it is necessary to understand how it came to be adopted.

In 1830 the Turkish Empire seemed to be on the eve of dissolution. It had been helpless against the Greek revolt, until the Sultan called in the aid of his very independent vassal, Mehemet Ali of Egypt. It had been still more helpless against the invading Russian armies of 1828 and 1829, and had been forced to accept a humiliating peace, and to promise an indemnity which it had no means of paying. Dissolution threatened the Turkish Empire on two sides: on the one side was the menace of Russia, on the other the am-

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. VII. chap. viii. p. 114.

bition of the Sultan's unruly vassal, Mehemet Ali of Egypt. Since the time of Catherine II. it had been the aim of Russian policy to get control over Constantinople. Nicholas I. shared this ambition, but he knew that the other Powers would not willingly allow him to attain his end by conquest. He aimed, therefore, at bringing Turkey under a sort of Russian protectorate; and the threatening power of Mehemet Ali offered him an opportunity of achieving this aim.

Mehemet Ali was a ruthless oriental despot, but he was also a very able man. He had brought all the resources of Egypt under his control, and he devoted all the wealth which he drew from a pitiless exploitation of his subjects to the organisation of a great military power. Seen from a distance, his rule seemed to compare very favourably with that of the Sultan, or any other Eastern potentate. The French, who had taken a special interest in Egypt ever since Napoleon's expedition, made him their protégé, and hoped through him to establish their influence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Mehemet's military and naval strength had been shown in the Greek war, when his son Ibrahim would have drowned the Greek rising in blood if Russia, France and Britain had not intervened. For his help in Greece Mehemet had demanded a high reward from his suzerain the Sultan. He had already received Crete, but Syria also had been promised to him. In 1831 his son Ibrahim invaded Syria and easily overran it. The Sultan declared him a rebel, but Ibrahim defeated the armies sent against him, marched into Asia Minor, and threatened Constantinople. Having no other means of defence, the Sultan could only appeal to the Powers for aid. Russia sent a fleet to defend Constantinople, while France used her influence with Mehemet, and persuaded him to be content with Syria, and to withdraw his troops. But the cession of Syria was a bitter pill for the Sultan. Looking forward to vengeance, he consented to a treaty of defensive alliance with the Tsar (Unkiar-Skelessi, 1833), by which Russia was permitted to send ships of war through the Bosphorus, and practically acquired a protectorate over Turkey.

But at this the other Powers took alarm. During the next few years a many-sided diplomatic struggle was waged in Constantinople, and the Sultan found himself surrounded by professed well-wishers all of whom assured him that they bore him a far more disinterested affection than Russia. Henceforth, for eighty years, Constantinople was to be the

scene of incessant intrigues, and the Turk acquired a very pretty skill in playing off his friends one against the other. The Tsar was forced to recognise that it would be impossible to exercise the single-handed protectorate for which he had hoped ; and Turkey passed under the singularly ineffective joint guardianship of all the Great Powers. On the whole she was inclined to give most of her favour to Britain, who enjoyed for a generation predominant influence at Constantinople, especially after 1842, when the embassy at Constantinople was given to Stratford Canning, who showed a remarkable power of holding his own in the web of intrigue, and of winning the confidence of the Turkish ministers.

In 1838 the Sultan thought he was strong enough to deal with Mehemet Ali, and his armies were ordered to drive that usurper out of Syria. They met with as little good fortune as in 1832, and once more an Egyptian army threatened Constantinople. But now Mehemet had to deal with the Concert of Europe. The Tsar was too wise to act on the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi ; but he saw a chance of driving a wedge between France and Britain, whose *entente* was inconvenient to the Eastern monarchies. France was anxious to make the best terms for Mehemet, and to secure for him a large and independent empire. Palmerston, on the other hand, regarded Mehemet as the source of disturbance ; he was perturbed by Mehemet's aggressive activity not only in Syria but in Arabia, where his conquests provided the occasion for the British occupation of Aden (1839) ; and he had persuaded himself that the strength of the Turkish Empire must be maintained as a safeguard against Russia, and that it could reorganise itself with British help. He demanded that Mehemet should be limited to Egypt, and kept in a state of vassalage. The other Powers agreed ; and, without any consultation with France, these terms were forcibly imposed upon Mehemet.

The consequences of this solution were twofold. On the one hand, Turkey learnt to regard Britain as her friend and protector, and during the next ten years pretentious and ineffectual projects of reform were set on foot by an Anglo-phil Vizier, Reshid Pasha. They came to nothing ; but even Stratford Canning, who knew his Turk, seems to have believed in them. On the other hand, the Franco-British *entente* was broken. France was so much wounded that for a moment, in 1840, she was on the point of going to war. This folly was avoided ; but the fruitful partnership of the two liberal Powers was dissolved in bitterness.

§ 4. *The Revolutionary Movement in Europe, and the  
Revolutions of 1848.*

While the Governments of Europe were engrossed by the Eastern Question and many other diplomatic problems on which we need not touch, there was going on, beneath their feet and almost unmarked, a movement of opinion which was soon to bring about an upheaval more sudden and more widespread than even that of 1789. The ideal of Nationalism and the vision of Democracy were taking possession of the minds and hearts not merely of a few students and poets but of great masses of people in all the countries of Western Europe; and alongside of them another ferment was beginning to work, though as yet less potently—the ferment of Socialism.

Some part of this stir of ideas was due to men of learning, whose writings seemed to have no direct revolutionary bearing: the studies of historians, philologists, and political philosophers in Germany, Italy, France and other countries, were stimulating the sense of national pride, reviving the ardours of 1789, and providing new arguments for the apostles of democracy. But far more important was the underground revolutionary movement which went on in innumerable secret societies in almost every European country. It was secret because in almost every country save Britain no real freedom of discussion was allowed, either in the press or in meetings. The suppression of discussion was held to be a safeguard against revolution. It was, in truth, the very opposite, for the wildest dreams and projects flourished in obscurity, unrestrained by the healthy winds of criticism. There was ferment in Britain as on the Continent. But it went on openly, unchecked; it was subject to criticism, and made reasonable thereby; and for that reason it led to no violence. And if, in the end, the British agitation seemed to have achieved nothing, that was but a superficial impression, for the long public controversy impressed upon the mind of the nation a sense of the ills which had led to it.

In general this vast underground propaganda preached, with a sanguine faith, the doctrine of complete democracy as a sure avenue to the Millennium. But with this doctrine was linked, in all the lands which were disunited or subject to foreign dominion, the yet more inspiring vision of national unity and freedom. It was in these years that nationalism became a powerful motive force in European history, and



began to rule the minds of thousands like a religion. The most striking feature of the movement was that it was international in its character ; and this was due to the fact that the repressive policy of the reactionary Governments drove the most active spirits into exile. They naturally took refuge in the few places where freedom was allowed to thrive ; and there, comparing notes and drawing inspiration from one another, they turned the many national conspiracies into one great international conspiracy. They gathered in Paris, in Brussels, in Switzerland. But above all they gathered in London ; for, in defiance of the protests of European Governments, Britain opened her hospitable gates to all political refugees, so long as they observed the laws. It was the gathering of these polyglot, cosmopolitan enthusiasts and conspirators in common centres that accounted for the simultaneity with which the revolution, when it came, broke out in every part of Europe as soon as the signal was given.

Among all these exiles the greatest was the noble and selfless Italian patriot, Joseph Mazzini, to whom, more than to any other man, was due the definition of the doctrine of nationality in its most exalted form. He had taken up the cause of Italian unity in 1830 ; he had spent six years as a hunted exile in France and Switzerland ; and in 1837 he took refuge in London, where he spent most of the remainder of his life, writing and contriving forlorn hopes ; his influence was deeply felt in Britain. Mazzini's faith in democracy was as fervent as his belief in nationality : the two causes were inseparable in his mind. But his nationalism was by no means exclusively Italian. He dreamed of a Europe that should consist of a brotherhood of free nations, living together in peace and mutual respect ; and it was the loftiness of this ideal which won for him the reverence of thousands of generous-minded men in all countries.

The twin causes of Nationalism and Liberalism (whose future conflicts the dreamers did not foresee) afforded the main inspiration of the revolutionary movement. But alongside of them was emerging the new gospel of Socialism. The Industrial Revolution was spreading from Britain to Europe ; and wherever it was at work the discontents which it had already evoked in Britain found expression. There were many Utopian projects, and many little Socialist groups were at work during these years, though their influence as yet was not great. But now two writers appeared who had definite programmes to offer. In France

Louis Blanc published in 1839 a work on the *Organisation of Labour*, in which he advocated the organisation of industries in factories financed by the State, but controlled by the workmen instead of by capitalist *entrepreneurs*. The book went through six editions between 1839 and 1848, and had a powerful influence in the French revolution of the latter year. In 1847, on the eve of the revolution, a far more important work appeared: *The Communist Manifesto*, written by an exiled German-Jew, Karl Marx. It proclaimed the grim and desolate creed that all history consisted of the struggles of classes for economic supremacy; that the next struggle must be between the 'proletarians' or wage-earners and the 'capitalists' who (in Marx's view) took most of the wealth created by the proletarians' labour without contributing anything themselves; that this struggle necessitated 'a violent overturning of all existing social order'; and that, to this end, the proletarians of all lands must disregard national distinctions, and unite in a common cause. The *Manifesto* fell flat at the moment; but its appearance was a portent.

Ere long (1849) Marx had to take refuge in Britain, the one safe harbour for exiles and dreamers, where he spent the rest of his life. In London he made the acquaintance of Mazzini; but the prophets of the two most explosive ideas which have been at work in modern Europe had the lowest opinion of one another. Marx, an unflinching materialist, felt nothing but contempt for the idealism of the Italian prophet; Mazzini, on his part, distrusted a man of whom he felt that 'hatred outweighs love in his heart.'

Suddenly, in the spring of 1848, all this preparation bore fruit in a simultaneous outburst of revolution which affected almost every European State from the Straits of Dover to the Vistula. Everywhere the resistance of the constituted

Governments collapsed as easily as the walls of Jericho fell before the trumpets of the Israelites. Everywhere democratic systems were set up; and across a continent that seemed to be dissolved in chaos two great undisturbed States looked at one another: Britain, preserved from disorder by her own expanding freedom, and watching with sympathy the struggles of other peoples to be free; and Russia, safeguarded by the stern despotism of her master, and waiting for an opportunity to intervene in behalf of absolutism. For a time it seemed that complete democracy was going to triumph throughout Europe, and the revolutionary leaders, in the intoxication of victory, felt nothing but con-

tempt for the slow and cautious advance which Britain had made. But the new national and democratic States collapsed as quickly as they had arisen. Within three years they had all fallen, and the old Governments had resumed their sway, sobered and alarmed, but secure. Once more, violent revolution had proved to be the most treacherous and uncertain path towards liberty.

We cannot here attempt even the baldest summary of the complex and intricate events which filled the years 1848 and 1849. But some of their broad results may be noted, because of their importance for the future. In France a system of the most complete democracy, based upon universal suffrage, was easily established. But when the President of the new republic came to be elected by popular vote, an overwhelming majority of votes was cast for Louis Napoleon, nephew of the great conqueror. This ominous event was partly due to the dangerous situation which had been created in Paris by a misconceived attempt to put into effect a parody of the project of Louis Blanc; for a mob of armed workmen, collected in Paris by the promise of State-organised work, became so formidable that hard fighting and heavy loss of life were incurred in reducing them to obedience. After three years of conflict with the democratic Assembly, the President established his personal power by a *coup d'état*, restored the despotic system of his uncle, and then obtained an overwhelming plebiscite vote in support of what he had done (1852). Democracy based upon universal suffrage had been established among a people untrained in self-government; and the first use which it made of its powers was to destroy itself, and to establish a despotism which in twenty years brought France to ruin. In Italy an almost simultaneous rising swept away all the petty princes; but the revolutionary leaders could not agree among themselves, and by the summer of 1849 the old régime had been everywhere restored. Real heroism was displayed in many of the episodes of the Italian revolution, notably in Garibaldi's defence of Rome; but there was only one of all the Italian States which preserved the liberal institutions set up in 1848. This was the little kingdom of Sardinia; and its brave liberalism made it the nucleus of the future united Italy. In the Austrian Empire all the discordant races struck for their national freedom, and the populace of Vienna drove the Emperor to take refuge in the Tyrol. But the mutual jealousies of the various peoples led to their undoing; Hungary, the last among them to hold out, was

defeated partly by the hatred of its Slay subjects, partly by an army which the Tsar sent across the Carpathians, at the critical moment, to stamp out the embers of revolution. Finally, in Germany the revolution began with the simultaneous establishment or promise of democracy in all the thirty-nine States, including even Prussia; while a democratic Parliament was elected to draft a constitution for united Germany, in place of Metternich's futile Confederation. But provincial jealousies, the rivalry of Prussia and Austria, and the unpractical policy of the revolutionary leaders, ruined these fair hopes. By 1850 the vision of united Germany had been dissipated; the Confederation was re-established under the presidency of Austria; Prussia had been humiliated; and all that remained from the revolution was the existence of more or less ineffective parliamentary systems in a number of the States—notably in Prussia, which now first entered the ranks of the parliamentary countries.

In 1850, reaction once more reigned in most of the European States; and the revolution which had been so long in preparation, and which had opened with such brilliant success, seemed to have wrought more harm than good. This was not wholly true, for in many ways the memory of the great uprising of the peoples influenced the minds of their rulers, and modified their policy. But at least the conclusion seemed to be established that violent revolution formed a terribly uncertain mode of attaining useful results. Belief in revolution as a quick way of reaching the Millennium had haunted the mind of Europe since 1789. The disasters of 1848 destroyed this belief; and the European peoples turned to other modes of satisfying their desires. Nothing more contributed to this process of conversion than the spectacle of what had meanwhile been happening in Britain. For Britain also had had her revolutionary movement; but instead of closing the safety-valves, she had let it blow itself off, nay, she had used it to gain driving-power for great labours of reform.

[Hazen, *Europe since 1815*; Seignobos, *Political History of Contemporary Europe*; Débidour, *Histoire Diplomatique de l'Europe*; Bourgeois, *Manuel Historique de Politique Étrangère*; Fisher, *Revolutionary Tradition in Europe*; Vander Linden, *Belgium*; Bulwer, *Palmerston*; Marriott, *Eastern Question*; Muir, *Nationalism and Internationalism and National Self-Government*; Cameron, *Egypt in the Nineteenth Century*; Bolton King, *History of Italian Unity and Life of Mazzini*; Beer, *Karl Marx*; Frost, *Secret Societies of the European Revolution*.]

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GREAT REFORM ACT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

(A.D. 1830-1832)

#### § I. *The Fight for Reform.*

WHEN George IV. died it had become evident that a strong and sustained attack was about to be made upon the entrenched power of the landowning oligarchy. But it was still doubtful whether the necessary changes would be made by constitutional or by revolutionary means. The difficulties in the way of constitutional action seemed overwhelmingly great; for this would mean that the oligarchy, which controlled both Houses of Parliament, would have to consent to its own overthrow. There had been many reform motions in Parliament; they had led to nothing save the cancellation of the electoral privilege in a couple of exceptionally corrupt boroughs. The Whigs, it is true, had adopted the cause of parliamentary reform. But the Whigs were great landowners and borough-owners like the Tories; nobody expected much from them. Moreover, though the election of 1830 increased their numbers in the House of Commons, they had no secure majority. The Duke of Wellington was still able to go on for a time; and his attitude towards the question of the day (which was the attitude of most Tories) was expressed in a speech in the House of Lords, in which he announced that he would 'always feel it his duty to resist' parliamentary reform, and made the famous declaration that if he had to frame a legislature, 'I do not mean to assert that I could form such a legislature as you possess now, for the nature of man is incapable of reaching such excellence at once; but my great endeavours would be to form some description of legislature which would produce the same results.'

The Duke's Government was defeated, but only by a combination of the Whigs with those extreme Tories who could not forgive Catholic Emancipation. Earl Grey, the

Whig leader, formed a ministry ; but it had a very precarious majority, and it was a characteristically Whig junta —there were only two members of the cabinet who were not peers or the sons of peers, and these two were great land-owners. What chance was there that such a cabinet, in such a Parliament, would carry any real measure of reform ? The sole chance seemed to lie in violent revolution ; and the ease and swiftness with which a revolution had just been effected in France reconciled many moderate men to the prospect.

Revolution, indeed, was in the air in 1830. The Home Office was deluged with warnings of an intended rising in London. The Radicals were holding crowded nightly meetings, and mouthing loud threats. It was thought unsafe to let the new King drive through the streets to the opening of Parliament. In Birmingham a great Political Union had been organised by Thomas Attwood at the beginning of the year, and it was enrolling thousands of recruits, many of whom were drawn from the normally conservative middle class. In the North there was an epidemic of strikes ; there was a great project to combine all the Trade Unions for the overthrow of ' capitalism ' ; there was talk of a march on London by 40,000 men. In the Southern counties a Peasants' Revolt broke out in this year. Beginning in Kent in August, it spread rapidly into Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Berkshire. The sky was aflame with the reflection of burning ricks ; threshing-machines were destroyed ; threatening letters signed by ' Captain Swing ' were received by landowners and farmers ; for a time some districts were at the mercy of the rebels. This movement, it is true, had no political aims. It was a blind protest by the rural labourers against the misery to which they had been reduced by the agrarian revolution and the Poor Law system. But it was highly alarming to the land-owning oligarchy. The first task which fell to the new Whig Government was that of suppressing this pitiful revolt ; and under the direction of the Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, it was sternly done. Special commissions of judges were sent down to deal with the affected regions ; and after trials whose records are harrowing to read, many ignorant and misguided men were hanged, and scores were shipped off as convicts to Australia.

Thus everywhere revolution seemed to be afoot. This was the atmosphere, an atmosphere of strain and apprehension, amid which Lord Grey's ministry, with its pre-

carious majority, with its own aristocratic traditions, and without the backing of any enthusiasm in the country, took up the task of guiding Britain out of her troubles. The proud governing class, which had never yielded to any threats even from Napoleon at his mightiest, knew that revolution was in the air, and most of them were ready to meet it with defiance. Could a more excellent way be found? Could the governing class have the magnanimity to recognise that the day of their domination was over, and themselves throw open the gates of the citadel, not as to a conquering enemy, but as to fellow-citizens? On the answer to that question depended the future of Britain and of the British Commonwealth.

Earl Grey, the Whig Prime Minister upon whom this heavy responsibility rested, was the same Charles Grey who had twice introduced reform proposals in the House of Commons in the dark days of anti-revolutionary obscurantism.<sup>1</sup> An aristocrat to his finger-tips, dignified, courageous, punctiliously honourable, and distrustful of all extravagance in word or deed, he was no believer in democracy; but he did believe in liberty and equal laws, and he felt the injustice of entrenched class privilege. One of his first acts was to appoint a cabinet committee to draft a 'Reform Bill'. The chairman was Grey's son-in-law, Lord Durham, an able, hot-tempered, generous-minded young man, whose advanced opinions had earned for him the sobriquet of Radical Jack. His two chief colleagues were Lord John Russell, son of the Duke of Bedford, a zealous young reformer; and Lord Althorp, son of Earl Spencer, also a proclaimed reformer, and a man of transparent sincerity and scrupulous honour. These men were of the bluest blood of the Whig aristocracy; but they were also the young men, the bold men, of the party; and Grey had given them their chance. They produced their proposals; the Cabinet gasped, but swallowed them; and Lord John Russell was given the task of introducing the bill in the House of Commons.

When Lord John rose in his place on March 1, 1831, nobody inside or outside of Parliament expected from the Whigs any drastic proposals of change. Everybody was therefore startled, and either delighted or horrified, by the magnitude of the scheme. It proposed to admit copyholders and leaseholders, besides freeholders, to the county franchise. It proposed to sweep away the anomalies of the borough franchise by conferring the vote upon every tenant

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 165 and 169.

of premises worth £10 a year—only 4s. a week. This would disfranchise many voters in the very few democratic constituencies like Westminster and Preston, but it would place supreme political power in the hands of a new political class. But, most sensational of all, the bill proposed to deprive fifty-five close boroughs of the right of returning two members, and to strip fifty more of one of their members, while forty-two populous boroughs were to be represented. This was the part of the Bill which most impressed the public imagination. The 'borough-owner' was smitten hip and thigh. The hoary abuse of the 'pocket-borough,' the very symbol of irresponsible class-ascendancy, was to disappear from the British system.

In Parliament the first feeling was one of consternation and incredulity. One hundred and fifty members heard that the constituencies for which they sat were to be abolished. The Whigs had betrayed their order. On the other hand the country was captivated by the magnitude and courage of the scheme. The debates in Parliament were followed with a closeness never known before. Newspapers could find space for nothing but the great discussion. Crowds came out from the towns to meet the stage-coaches and get early news. All the talk of revolution came to an end, save among a very few irreconcilable extremists. The Whigs had become the leaders of an almost united nation; and the danger of a class-war for the possession of political power was averted, because one section of the governing class had frankly taken the lead on the popular side.

But the forces of resistance were very powerful, and the struggle was a long one. The second reading of the bill was carried by only one vote. Then Parliament was dissolved; and so great was the public enthusiasm that even in the unreformed constituencies the Government obtained a very large majority. Reintroduced, the bill was carried through the new House of Commons by majorities of over 100. It went up to the House of Lords (September 1831), while the public agitation for 'the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill' grew more vehement, and there was talk of forcible resistance if the Lords should reject the bill. The Lords did reject the bill, by a majority of 41; though many who hated it abstained from voting because they recognised the danger of rejecting it. Feeling in the country mounted to fever-height. Consols fell. Merchants and bankers met to express their 'grief, surprise and dismay.' There were vast meetings and processions in London



and the big towns, and serious riots at Derby and Nottingham, while at Bristol the mob sacked the Mansion-house and the Bishop's palace, and burnt down the gaols. A very little might have brought a violent upheaval. Sydney Smith, the witty Whig parson, rendered a real public service when he awakened the popular sense of humour by an apologue which made the whole nation laugh. He compared the House of Lords to Mrs. Partington, striving with her mop to sweep a high tide out of her house. 'The Atlantic was roused. Mrs. Partington's spirit was up. But I need not tell you the contest was unequal. The Atlantic Ocean beat Mrs. Partington. Gentlemen, be at your ease—be quiet and steady. You will beat Mrs. Partington.'

In December 1831 the bill was introduced for a third time, and passed through the Commons; and in March 1832 it once more came up to the Lords. The waverers, who feared revolution, had increased in number, and the bill passed its second reading by 9 votes. But in committee the opposition carried the postponement of the clauses disfranchising the pocket-boroughs. Thereupon Grey resigned, and the final storm began. Wellington tried to form a ministry; public feeling would have none of him. There were plans for an open revolt. Francis Place, who was in the thick of it, began to organise a run on the Bank of England, and covered the hoardings of London with placards: 'Go for Gold and Stop the Duke.' But before the excitement passed into tumult Wellington gave up his hopeless task, and Grey resumed office, armed by a reluctant promise from the King that he would create sufficient peers to carry the bill. Anxious to avoid this necessity, the King wrote to Wellington suggesting that abstentions in the Lords would save the situation; and Wellington, recognising as a soldier when a position was untenable, withdrew from the discussion, followed by many others. In doing so he recognised what henceforth became a doctrine of the constitution—that the House of Lords must not persist in opposition when the will of the nation was clear. The battle was won. Revolution had been averted by the good sense and public spirit of the ruling oligarchy, one half of which had voluntarily opened the gates of the citadel, while the other half, after fighting hard, had withdrawn from the conflict, not without dignity. On June 7, 1832, the royal assent was given to the greatest new departure yet deliberately made in British government; and the field was clear for the work of reconstruction.

§ 2. *The Significance of the Reform Act.*

The real significance of the Reform Act was that it broke away from prescription and precedent, which had hitherto governed British constitutional development, and deliberately altered the foundations of government: even the Revolution of 1688 was based upon prescription, since it was justified by the assertion that James II. had disregarded established and customary laws. To get rid of the tyranny of prescription was the first step in a process of conscious reconstruction. It is to the credit of the governing class that it frankly accepted and acted upon this change of principle. For that reason it was permitted to retain the leadership of the nation; but it was leadership, and not mastery, which it now enjoyed. Its continued leadership was no doubt in part due to snobbishness. But snobbishness means not only an exaggerated deference for one's 'social superiors,' it also induces an eager imitation of their ways. In so far as these ways are admirable, snobbishness may be a useful social force. The British ruling class had, through long training, acquired many qualities which were invaluable for the conduct of public affairs; and these were carefully mimicked by the new strata which successively made their way to active participation in power. Some of the best traditions of British government, its dignity, its sense of the importance of 'good form' and of 'fair play,' its loyalty to agreements once arrived at, and, perhaps above all, the participation in public life of a higher proportion of men of education and leisure than are to be found in the public life of most other countries, have been due to the way in which a long tradition was saved from any sudden breach in 1832.

Because the Act of 1832 established the principle that no prescriptive rights may prevail against the national will, it affected not only the House of Commons, to which it directly referred, but the Crown and the House of Lords. The Crown lost the power of influencing the composition of ministries: the last occasion on which the Crown attempted to use this power was in 1834, when William IV. dismissed the Melbourne Ministry because he disapproved of some of its members, though it commanded a majority in the House of Commons. A general election reversed his decision; he had to submit; and thenceforward—and especially after the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837—the Crown accepted the decision of the popular vote on these questions. Again,

the House of Lords had recognised the limits of its power in 1832. Henceforward it was, on the whole, careful to observe them, always giving way in face of a manifest expression of the public will; and to this it owed its survival through a period of rapid change.

It is usual to say that the Act of 1832 gave political power to the middle class. This is scarcely an accurate statement, since many thousands who could afford houses worth 4s. a week could not, in any ordinary use of the term, be described as belonging to the middle class. But it was undoubtedly with this class that preponderant power was vested, and it was their favour that politicians strove to win. The governing opinion of Britain during the next generation was the opinion of people of moderate means, neither rich nor poor, industrious but not overworked, and generally thrifty, unadventurous, conventional, unimaginative, soberly religious and anxiously respectable. They fixed the character of the next era. Political philosophers from Aristotle to Lecky have sung the praises of the middle class. One quality we may at least allow to them: putting a high value upon minute social distinctions among themselves, they are free from any unified class-consciousness, and by that fact are emancipated from the grosser temptations of class ascendancy. This was why they willingly accepted the leadership of the older ruling class. This was why, after thirty-five years of supremacy, they voluntarily abdicated their control of political power, and opened the gates of the citadel to the class of manual workers, who had meanwhile ceased to be obstreperous and menacing.

The Act of 1832 not only changed the balance of power in national politics, it also brought a great change in the character of the two historic political parties. The Whigs, who after their great victory held almost a monopoly of power for nearly ten years, had been an aristocratic 'connexion'; and their successive ministries were still very exclusive in character, consisting almost wholly of peers and the sons of peers. But their following in the new Parliament was very different from the old Whig 'connexion.' It included Philosophic Radicals of the school of Bentham, popular Radicals like Cobbett, Irish Repealers led by O'Connell, spokesmen of the 'dissenting interest,' representatives of the great industries, and enthusiasts for reform in many special fields. Many of them were restive under Whig leadership, though they kept the ministry in power; and indeed the impetus for the reforming activity of the

next years came from these groups, not from the Whig magnates. The name of Whig, though it was still used, no longer suited this variegated host of reformers. The ministries were Whig, but the driving force behind them, to which the constructive work of the period was mainly due, cannot be accurately described by that name; and we shall not hesitate to use the word Liberal as the only appropriate designation for the composite party of reform, though it did not begin to be habitually employed until after the period with which we are now concerned. In truth, the British Liberal party, which has always included many groups bound together by no rigid creed, began its existence in 1832.

An equally marked change was coming over the Tories, some of whom submitted to the new order sulkily and with resentment, while others accepted it frankly. Among the latter was Sir Robert Peel, who was not merely the ablest of the Tories, but beyond comparison the ablest and the strongest man in either party. Peel was the most characteristically British of nineteenth-century statesmen. Upright and public-spirited, with a strong grasp of the facts that came within his horizon, and a great gift of massive and persuasive argument, he seldom looked far ahead, and was distrustful of doctrines and theories. Three times in his career, on Catholic Emancipation, on Parliamentary Reform, on Free Trade, he was forced by the logic of events to discard the views he had held, and to change his course. He did so frankly and openly, although on two occasions this involved shattering his party; yet he preserved the trust and esteem of his fellow-citizens. As soon as the first reformed Parliament met, he announced that he regarded the decision of 1832 as irrevocable, and that, far from resisting all change, he desired to reform every admitted abuse, but to do so cautiously and gradually, so as to make the least possible breach of continuity. This attitude was still more clearly expressed in the manifesto which he issued to his constituents at Tamworth in the election of 1834. Peel's attitude was resented by many of the older Tories, but it won for him the confidence of a growing body of opinion in the country, drawn from all sections of the community. The party which Peel led was not to resist, but to be a partner in, the work of reconstruction. Even in opposition this was so: as leader of the opposition Peel gave real help in the reconstructive measures of the decade following 1832; and when at length he obtained effective

power, the measures which he carried were as essentially liberal in character as those which had been introduced by the Whig ministries. For a policy of this kind the name of Tory seemed to be inappropriate. It was henceforward used only for the extreme reactionaries; and the name Conservative came into use in its place.

Between the two parties thus reconstructed there was no absolute cleavage. Both recognised the need for change, and both were largely influenced by the ideas of the Benthamites and the Economists, which in the main dictated the character of the reconstructive legislation. Hence this work, which we shall analyse in the next chapter, had a marked unity of character, whether it was carried by Liberal or Conservative ministries; and we shall deal with the whole process under the title of 'The Liberal Reconstruction,' because it was inspired by the essential liberal ideal, that, as human progress and social health depend upon individual character, ability and energy, all means should be adopted which will free individuality from needless restraints, and enable it to work for its own advantage and that of the community.

Because there was no fundamental cleavage between the two main parties, they obtained, especially from 1834 onwards, an almost equal degree of support from the electorate. Majorities were never large, and the party in power always had to give weight to the criticism of the party in opposition. Party ties were by no means rigid, and men passed easily from one side to the other: the real tug was between the reactionary Tories on the one side, and the eager Radicals on the other, each striving to influence the solid body of moderate opinion. This state of things had one very healthy result. As the party in opposition could always hope that it would soon be called upon to govern, it was always active in criticism, but its criticism was always weighted by a sense of responsibility, and was seldom merely negative or destructive. 'Her Majesty's Opposition' thus became as essential an element in the working of the national system as Her Majesty's Government itself; and for that reason the system enjoyed a high degree of purity and stability which more than counterbalanced such defects as it possessed; while the results arrived at were genuinely agreed results, the outcome of real discussion.

But it was not only Parliament or its parties which shared in the legislative activity of this period. One of the outstanding features of the period was the immense amount of

work that was done by Royal Commissions or Parliamentary Committees appointed to inquire into large public problems before legislative action was taken. Practically all the important enactments of the time were based upon the reports of such bodies, which collected great masses of material, and heard vast numbers of witnesses. The most active part in these bodies was frequently taken by comparatively unknown men, often not even members of Parliament, but selected on the ground of their special knowledge. Some of these men (such as Edwin Chadwick, the real author of the new Poor Law) were keen disciples of Bentham, and carried into politics Bentham's love of system, and his passion for detailed and scientific investigation. They deserve no small part of the credit for the legislative work of the period.

For these reasons—because both parties were broadly working in the same direction, and because much of the best work was done independently of party—the questions of party strategy and the vicissitudes of party warfare, which bulk so largely in most narratives of the period, were really of minor importance; and in the next chapter we shall for the most part put them aside, in order to survey in a coherent way the legislative work of the period; we shall also disregard the undercurrent of revolutionary agitation which went on throughout the reconstructive period, leaving it for treatment in a later chapter. But it will be convenient to summarise very briefly here the changes of ministry which took place between 1832 and 1852, for convenience of reference.

Grey did not long retain the office of Prime Minister after his victory of 1832. He retired in 1834, and the ministry was reconstructed under Lord Melbourne. But William IV., objecting to some of the arrangements which Melbourne proposed, forced him to resign in spite of his large majority, and called Sir Robert Peel to power. Peel, of course, demanded a dissolution, the result of which was to restore the Whigs to power, but with a greatly reduced majority. Becoming gradually more impotent and ineffective, Melbourne's Government lasted into the reign of Queen Victoria, and it fell to him to render the invaluable service of training the young Queen in the duties of a constitutional monarch. Melbourne resigned in 1839, but Peel, once more Prime Minister, held office only for a moment, owing to a dispute with the Queen as to whether the Ladies of the Bedchamber should be changed when one party succeeded

another in office ; and the Whigs, now both weak and discredited, lingered on till 1841. Then came Peel's great ministry, his first real tenure of power. His Repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 broke his party, and was followed by his defeat ; and from 1846 until 1852 the Whigs, now led by Lord John Russell, carried on the government in dependence upon the support of the small group of Peel's personal followers, who were ultimately to be merged in the Liberal party, and to 'unwhig' it finally. In the course of these twenty years there were two periods of first-rate importance, 1832-1836, and 1841-1846 ; but between and after these more exciting spells, the stream of reconstructive legislation went on incessantly ; and the period is most conveniently treated as a single whole.

[Butler, *Passing of the Great Reform Bill* ; Trevelyan, *Lord Grey of the Reform Act* ; Greville *Memoirs* ; Spencer Walpole, *History of England from 1815* and *Life of Lord J. Russell* ; Porritt, *Unreformed House of Commons* ; Parker, *Sir R. Peel* ; Russell, *Recollections and Reflections* ; Brougham, *Memours of His Own Times* ; Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty* ; Maxwell, *Life of Wellington* , Reid, *Life of Lord Durham* ; Anson, *Law and Custom of the Constitution* ; May, *Constitutional History of England* ; Molesworth, *History of England from 1830.*]

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE LIBERAL RECONSTRUCTION

(A.D. 1832-1852)

#### § 1. *Multifarious Legislative Activity.*

WITH the Reform Act of 1832 began an activity in reconstructive legislation, to which there had been no parallel in any earlier period of British history. Almost every aspect of the old prescriptive and traditional system, in Church and State, was overhauled; and although in some fields the revision was tentative and uncertain, in others it was bold and drastic. We shall best gain a clear idea of its range and variety by disregarding strict chronological order, and grouping the reconstructive measures according to their character.

Some of the most remarkable work of the period belonged to the realm of imperial policy; these years were as important in the definition of the principles on which the modern Commonwealth was to be organised, as the reign of Charles II. was in the definition of the old colonial policy. We shall deal in later chapters<sup>1</sup> with the significance and results of the Abolition of Slavery, the momentous India Act of 1833, the Durham Report on Canada and the legislation which arose from it, the establishment of parliamentary government in Australia and New Zealand. But it is well to remember that these great measures were inspired by the same principles which guided the process of reconstruction in the homeland.

A very important group of measures dealt with the organisation of finance and of those public utilities upon which all industry depends; and here the influence of the scientific economists was all-powerful. In the first place, the British system of banking received its modern form during these years. The Bank Act of 1833 destroyed the last relics of the monopoly of the Bank of England, and encouraged the growth of joint-stock banks (which could give greater security than private banks) in every

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. x. and xi. below.



part of the country; whilst Peel's Bank Act of 1844 laid down the general principles of British banking as they have since, in the main, been upheld, and in particular regulated the issue of bank-notes. In the second place a very important departure in the organisation of trading concerns was taken when, in 1837, the first tentative permission was given to form companies with limited liability. It was not until 1862 that this system took its final shape; but it started in the era of reconstruction, and its value in encouraging the flow of capital into industry, and in diffusing widely an interest in commercial concerns, was of social as well as of economic importance. In the third place, it was during these years that the railway system was being created, and that its vital importance for the economic life of the country was being realised. The Railways Act of 1844, for which Gladstone was responsible, defined the relation of the State to the railways, placing these powerful corporations under State regulation, and making their rates and fares subject to parliamentary control. In the same group of measures may be included the establishment of a universal system of penny postage in 1840, and the reduction of the tax on newspapers from 4d. to 1d., which made possible the rise of a popular press.

Other measures were inspired by the humanitarian spirit. The reform of the Penal Code, begun by Peel, was greatly extended by Russell. Russell's Acts of 1837 and 1841 abolished the death penalty for all but the gravest crimes; imprisonment for debt almost came to an end; and persons charged with felonies were for the first time allowed to be represented by counsel. With these advances in humanity may be coupled the almost complete abolition of flogging in the army, and the disuse of the pressgang for manning the navy.

It was a corollary of the attack upon the exclusive privileges of the landowning oligarchy that there should also be an attack upon the exclusive privileges of the Established Church in England and Ireland. To the measures which related to the Irish Church we shall refer later; they were part of the Irish policy of the Liberals. In England an Act of 1836 swept away the claim of the Church to the sole control over marriages and over the registration of births and deaths. Marriages in dissenting churches were legalised; and a secular system of registration was set up throughout the country. Another Act commuted the vexatious payment of tithes into money payments on a fixed scale.

Again, an attempt was made to deal with the abuses which had arisen in the disposal of Church property. Some bishops drew enormous revenues from the estates of their sees, while others were underpaid. In 1838 an Ecclesiastical Commission was set up, to which the administration of all episcopal estates was transferred, and the Commissioners were instructed to equalise episcopal salaries. In the next year the scandal of pluralism, whereby many clergymen held two or three benefices together, and often paid no attention to any of them, was prohibited by law. These reforms certainly purified and strengthened the Church. But the mere fact that they were enacted by the secular power aroused a storm of protest. For while the Whigs, Erastian by tradition, asserted the right of the State to interfere in Church matters, High Churchmen repudiated this claim with passion, and they were backed by the Tories and the House of Lords. The Liberals were labelled as the party of irreligion; and reaction against Liberalism had much to do with the Oxford High Church movement, of which we shall have something to say in another place.<sup>1</sup>

The resentment of Churchmen was intensified by the fact that in this period the State began, timidly and tentatively, to meddle in the sphere of popular education, which had hitherto been left almost wholly to the Churches. The development of popular education (which began with the Sunday-school movement of 1782)<sup>2</sup> had received a great stimulus since the beginning of the nineteenth century through the application of the rival educational theories of Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster, both of whom maintained that the extension of public education could best be accelerated by the cheap method of the pupil-teacher system, that is, by setting the children to teach one another. Churchmen had adopted Bell's ideas, Dissenters had taken up Lancaster's; and two great school societies, the National (supported by the Church) and the British and Foreign (supported by the Dissenters) had taken in hand the development of the system and the training of teachers. In 1833 the Liberal Government set aside the sum of £20,000 *per annum* for grants-in-aid to the two societies. It was a ludicrously inadequate sum; but it was steadily increased, and had by 1851 risen to £150,000. But a very important consequence followed from these modest grants. In 1839 a Committee of the Privy Council was appointed to super-  
vise the distribution of the money, instead of leaving it to

<sup>1</sup> Below, chap. xii. p. 403.

<sup>2</sup> Above, p. 132.

the two societies ; and this was the modest origin of a State department of education. The Committee was served by a staff of inspectors, who visited and reported on the schools ; and these inspectors were the germ of the powerful educational bureaucracy, which has been mainly responsible for shaping the modern system of education. Here, as in other spheres, we may note the beginning of a departure from *laissez faire*, and, as a consequence, the beginning of the creation of a bureaucratic public service, interfering in matters which had hitherto been left to private enterprise.

But important as were some of the reforms we have already summarised, they were dwarfed by three great measures or groups of measures which profoundly influenced the life and organisation of the nation : the Municipal Reform Act, the New Poor Law, and the Factories and Mines Acts. All these were, or became the means to, great social reforms ; all contributed to raise the British people out of the morass into which they had been plunged by the Industrial Revolution. It is sometimes said that the Liberal reconstruction concerned itself purely with political and not with social reforms. There could not be a more misleading generalisation.

### § 2. *Municipal Reform, the New Poor Law, and Public Health.*

In two generations the Industrial Revolution had transformed the British people from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban people ; but nothing had yet been done to adapt the organs of government to the needs of the ugly towns which had grown up with such rapidity, and whose inhabitants had no common traditions, and no habits of association for common ends. Some boroughs possessed ancient charters, but their governments were mostly 'close corporations' whose members took no responsibility for the well-being of the community as a whole, but regarded themselves as concerned only with the rights and properties of the small body of privileged freemen ; and many of these close corporations were as corrupt as they were negligent of public needs. The towns which did not possess ancient charters were in a still worse plight ; for they depended for government mainly upon the cumbrous and antiquated machinery of the mediæval manorial court. Special bodies with rating powers had indeed been established in many places, by private Acts, to light or pave the streets or to

lay down drains. But their powers were always strictly limited. Amid this chaos of ineffective authorities there existed none which was held responsible for the general welfare of the community ; and a large part of the miseries of the working population of Britain was due to this state of things. Until it was rectified, there was no chance of social health for a town-dwelling people, such as the British people were rapidly becoming.

One of the first acts of the Government of 1832 was to appoint a Royal Commission on this problem ; and its very full and able report formed the basis of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835—a measure which, when all its consequences are considered, probably deserves the first place among the reconstructive enactments of this era. In every considerable town this Act set up an elected municipal council, to be chosen by the whole body of ratepayers ; and in all ancient boroughs the new councils took over the rights and properties of the old corporations. This was violently opposed by the reactionary Tories ; but Peel showed what he meant by Conservatism by giving his support to Government, and this enabled the bill to pass through both Houses substantially unchanged, save only that a group of aldermen were added to each council by the House of Lords, as a safeguard against the ‘ democracy ’ of the elected councillors. The powers at first conferred upon the municipal councils were limited. But this was easily rectified. Parliament could confer special powers by private Acts upon any town that asked for them ; and hundreds of Acts of this kind, promoted by individual towns, were passed during the following generation. Thus the towns early began to develop along their own lines, and to make instructive experiments : there was to be no rigid uniformity in the British municipal system.

The new system was a success from the outset. In every town many of the best men gave their time, without reward, to the great task of bringing order, decency, and dignity into town life ; and what is specially noteworthy is that this work, which involved the expenditure of very large funds, was carried out with an extraordinary absence of corruption. Corruption had been rampant under the old system ; it was, and has ever since been, practically non-existent under the new. By 1850 an immense improvement had been brought about in the condition of the British towns. They were for the first time adequately policed, drained and lighted. Some had obtained drastic powers for the demoli-

tion of insanitary houses, and were laying down strict building rules. A few were beginning to equip themselves with great public halls, with parks, with museums, libraries and galleries of art—all unknown luxuries in the days before municipal reform. Thanks to the labours of an army of public-spirited citizens, some elements of decency and dignity were beginning to qualify the conditions under which British working folk had to live. No greater reform illustrated this era of reform.

The second of the great restorative measures of the period was the new Poor Law of 1834, which was designed to undo the all but irreparable mischief that had been caused to the whole framework of British society, and especially to the labouring classes, by the way in which the Poor Law system had been worked since 1795.<sup>1</sup> In 1832 a strong Commission was appointed to inquire into the problem. Its ablest member was a young disciple of Bentham, Edwin Chadwick. Bentham had himself written on the Poor Law problem, and it was in the main his scheme of reform which the Commission recommended, and which was embodied in the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834. The primary aim of the Act (which was later extended, with modifications, to both Scotland and Ireland) was to emancipate the labourers, especially in the rural districts, from the degradation and servitude into which the old system had brought them, to leave them free to earn their own livelihood in self-respect, and to thrust upon them the responsibility for doing so. It was with the able-bodied man, pauperised in spite of himself, that this Act was primarily concerned; not with the children, the old and the sick. It provided that, after a transitional period of two years, no outdoor relief should be given to able-bodied workers: if they could get no employment elsewhere, they were to be relieved only on condition of going to a workhouse, where the conditions were to be such as to make any form of employment seem preferable. Outdoor relief was to be given only to those who could not work for their own livelihood.

In the main, drastic as they were, these provisions were salutary. They bred an unwillingness to 'go on the rates' which helped to restore the spirit of independence; they forced employers to pay at any rate a subsistence wage; they put an end to the ugly system of servitude to the poor-law authorities into which many British working people had been drawn; and they cut down the rates, in a few

<sup>1</sup> See above, pp. 216, 260, 314.

years, by one-half. But in the first instance they inflicted cruel hardships upon the vast numbers who had been taught to rely upon poor-relief. Two years did not form a long enough interval to let wages rise sufficiently to balance the withdrawal of allowances; and what made things worse was that by an unhappy chance the new Poor Law came into effect at a time of very bad trade. It seemed, and it was, a hard thing that the man who could obtain no work should be punished for his misfortune by the stony severity of the new Workhouses. The new Poor Law therefore earned the hatred of all the working-classes, and, more than any other cause, drove men by the thousand into the Chartist agitation. Yet in the end, harsh—perhaps needlessly harsh—though it was, the new system helped to drain the morass into which the labouring men of Britain were being dragged, and to restore their self-respect. It could not remedy all the evils of their lot; other means had to be found for that end, and the task of finding them was no easy one. But the drastic medicine of the Poor Law was, so far as it went, a real social reform.

The Act had also another important aspect. To carry out its provisions a whole series of new authorities had to be established. They were known as Boards of Guardians, and among them they covered the whole country. They took over the functions in regard to poor relief which had hitherto been performed by the Justices of the Peace and the Parish Vestries. But, unlike the Justices and the Vestries, they were in the main representative bodies elected by the rate-payers; and throughout rural England this was the first introduction of representative local government—the first step towards the creation of a new system of local government to replace the old traditional system, which had manifestly broken down. The Boards of Guardians presided over Poor Law administration for groups or 'unions' of neighbouring parishes. But somebody had to arrange the grouping of parishes. For this purpose a body of Poor Law Commissioners was appointed, in the first instance, for five years only; and the Commissioners also undertook the duty of guiding and supervising the Guardians in the application of the new system. These functions became so important that the Commissioners' appointment was renewed from time to time; and in 1847 they became the Poor Law Board, which was ultimately (1871) merged in the Local Government Board. The controlling mind among the Commissioners was Edwin Chadwick; and Chadwick, like his

master Bentham, had a profound belief in centralised control. His zeal and ability were impatient of the stupidities often displayed by local bodies. He allowed the Guardians very little freedom of action ; and it was he, by a rain of orders, circulars, and reports, who really shaped the new system.

Here was a new thing in British government : local representative bodies closely supervised and controlled by a central bureaucracy. The tradition of British government had always been to leave to local governments an almost unqualified autonomy, and this principle had been followed in the case of the municipal councils. But Chadwick's system represented a complete departure from this principle ; it represented the introduction of centralised bureaucratic control. Probably it led to swifter progress than might otherwise have been attained. But one thing is certain : the Boards of Guardians, thus checked, were never so attractive to men of vigour and ability as the municipal corporations of the towns.

Chadwick was a man of devouring zeal and energy ; and he was not content with his Poor Law work. He also had control of the new system of registration of births, marriages and deaths, established in 1836. In both capacities he was brought in contact with the appalling sanitary conditions which existed in all populous areas, and which were among the chief causes of the miseries of the poor. Two cholera epidemics showed the danger of these conditions ; and Chadwick undertook a great campaign for the improvement of Public Health. In 1848 he obtained a Public Health Act, which set up a central Board of Public Health, and enabled it to establish local Boards of Health, with large powers. These new bodies, like the Guardians, worked under the supervision of a strong and enlightened central bureaucracy. The work which they did was of the first importance for the improvement of the condition of the British people ; and the Public Health Acts were among the most beneficent of social reforms. They formed a sharp departure from the system of *laissez faire*.

### § 3. *Factory Legislation and the Breach with 'Laissez Faire.'*

But a still more important and salutary breach with the *laissez faire* system was embodied in the series of Factory Acts which were among the most significant innovations of this period. Attempts at legislation for the protection of

child-workers in textile factories had been made before—in 1802, in 1819, and in several Acts during the 'twenties. But all these Acts had been inoperative, because their enforcement was left to the Justices of the Peace, who were quite incapable of performing this function. In 1830 an agitation had begun among the factory operatives of Yorkshire and Lancashire for the restriction of the hours of children's labour to ten. A bill for this purpose was introduced in the Parliament of 1831 by Michael Sadler, Tory member for Leeds, in a speech which deeply moved the House of Commons. Sadler lost his seat in the election of 1832; but the cause was taken up by a young Tory of high rank, Lord Ashley, afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury, who now entered upon that long and devoted career which made him the most venerated philanthropist of nineteenth-century England. The code of legislation for the protection of the workers was indeed in a very large degree the work of Shaftesbury; and the part which he played, and the support which he received from many Tory landowners, who hated the manufacturers, has led to the often repeated assertion that the factory code was due to the Tories and resisted by the Liberals. *But the assertion is far from the truth.* It is true that the Factory Acts were opposed by many Liberal manufacturers, but it is also true that the great Act of 1833, which was the foundation of the whole code, was adopted by a Parliament which had an overwhelming Liberal majority, and that most of its successors were due to Liberal ministries. Moreover Shaftesbury's bill was taken over by Government, and recast by them on the advice of a Royal Commission which they appointed. And the most important of the changes was the introduction of the very provision which made the Act effective: the appointment of a staff of factory inspectors to see that its terms were carried out. Once again, the creation of a central bureaucratic staff was the means of making State intervention really operative, and the reports of the inspectors provided the main stimulus which led to the gradual development of the code.

The Act of 1833 dealt only with the labour of children in textile factories, forbidding the employment of any children under 9 years old, and limiting the hours of children under 13 to nine, and of 'young persons' under 18 to twelve. But neither the workpeople nor Lord Ashley were satisfied with these provisions. They next demanded the limitation of the hours of work to ten, not only for 'young persons'



but for women ; and their hope was that this would involve a corresponding limitation of men's labour also, since the work done by women and children was essential.

In 1844, under Peel's ministry, a measure which went some distance in this direction was passed ; in 1847, with the support of the Liberal Government then in power, Ashley secured a new Act which fixed the hours of work for ' women and young persons ' at ten, in such a way that the factories could not be kept open except during these hours ; and in 1850 these provisions were made secure and definite, and a Saturday half-holiday was obtained. The Home Office inspectors were made responsible for seeing that all these Acts were enforced ; and thus the hours of labour in the textile trades were regulated by the State, and the factories were placed, for some important purposes, under the supervision of State officials.

Meanwhile State intervention had been extended to other spheres. In 1840, again on the initiative of Lord Ashley, the employment of children in the sweeping of chimneys was prohibited. In the same year a Royal Commission was appointed to report on the employment of women and children in mines. Its report, published in 1842, drew so ugly a picture of cruelty and degradation that the conscience of the nation was aroused. Ashley at once introduced a Mines Bill which prohibited the employment of boys under 13 or of women : and, though the bill was somewhat watered down, it became law. Its enforcement was entrusted to Government inspectors, whose visits to the mines, like those of their colleagues to the factories, led to many important consequences.

Thus the twenty years following 1832 saw a very great departure in the attitude of the State towards industry. Under the guidance of a noble and self-sacrificing philanthropist, Britain had definitely broken away from the principle of *laissez faire*, and had adopted the view that it is the duty of the community to ensure that the process of wealth-making shall not be conducted in such a way as to be ruinous to the minds and bodies of those who are engaged in it. The principle was as yet applied only in the cases of women and children, and mainly in regard to hours of work. But it was not to stop there. The Inspector was abroad, taking notes ; and his influence was continuous and persistent.

§ 4. *Ireland : O'Connell, the Famine, and the Revival of  
Revolutionism. 1832-1845.*

If reconstruction was needed in Britain, it was still more needed in Ireland. The unjust privileges of the Anglican Church demanded curtailment; the grievances of tithe called for redress; above all, the economic problem which arose from over-population and from an utterly bad land-system, and which led to incessant agrarian outrages, cried aloud for remedial treatment. The Liberals of 1832 were not blind to the need for reform in Ireland. An extraordinarily large proportion of the time of Parliament was devoted to Irish questions. But the measures proposed only tinkered with the surface of the problem; and the steadfast opposition of the House of Lords deprived even these measures of effect.

In 1833 the revenues of the Church of Ireland were drastically dealt with, and it was proposed that part of them should be devoted to education and other public objects; but the House of Lords would not consent to such sacrilege. Year after year bills for the commutation of tithe and the transfer of some of the proceeds to public objects were introduced; but the House of Lords would not agree to any diversion of Church funds, and it was only by dropping this proposal that the Government obtained a Tithe Act in 1839. A Municipal Corporations Bill, on the model of the English Act, was proposed for Ireland; but the House of Lords would only consent to the introduction of such a system in a few of the largest towns. And the resistance of the House of Lords could not be overcome, because there was in England no strong body of opinion on Irish questions, and Irish opinion did not count. Meanwhile Coercion Acts, to deal with the incessant agrarian outrages of Ireland, were passed swiftly and easily, in face of the protests of most of the Irish members. Ireland was nearly always under exceptional legislation; and though these powers were not often used by the Liberal Governments, they were in existence. No Irishman could fail to feel that his country was still treated as a subject realm, and that the united Parliament did nothing to remedy her grievances.

Yet a great opportunity of reconciliation was open in these years. O'Connell, the great Irish leader, hated violence, called himself a Liberal, steadily supported the Liberal Governments, and pinned his hopes upon liberal reforms. If he had been made Chief Secretary for Ireland, the mere

fact of his appointment would have had great effect. But his appointment would have created a storm : when two of his followers were appointed to minor posts, an outcry was raised against the Government for appointing Irish Papists. And the real control of Ireland rested with the Protestant officials of Dublin Castle, despite the fact that Irish Catholics sat in the House of Commons. It is not surprising that, in face of these facts, Ireland was dissatisfied with her participation in a Parliament where her representatives were uniformly voted down on Irish questions, and that a clamorous demand was raised for the Repeal of the Union. O'Connell had started a Repeal agitation on the morrow of Catholic Emancipation, and in 1832 there were forty Repealers in the House of Commons. But during the period of Liberal ascendancy the Repeal agitation flagged, because O'Connell was trusting to the Liberals. And the result was that he lost his hold upon the loyalty of his countrymen.

For the young intellectuals of Ireland were losing patience with O'Connell and his constitutional methods. The enthusiasm of nationalism, at work in all the continental lands during these years, was seizing Ireland also. In 1842 a band of young men, Gavan Duffy and Thomas Davis chief among them, founded a newspaper with the significant title of *The Nation*. Written with passion and fire, it strove to touch the imagination of the Irish people by appeals to their history, to the long pitiful story of Irish sufferings. These young enthusiasts despised the slow and seemingly hopeless methods of persuasion ; they sang the praises of rebellion, the nobility of sacrificing the individual life for the life of a nation.

But O'Connell himself was losing patience. In 1840, when the Melbourne ministry was obviously about to fall, he founded a Repeal Association on the model of the Catholic Association of the 'twenties, and began to collect a Repeal Rent like the old Catholic Rent. His ascendancy soon revived. In 1842 the Association was so vigorous that a triumph like that of 1829 seemed within grasp, and O'Connell promised that 1843 should be the Year of Repeal. Immense and enthusiastic meetings were held in all parts of the country. For 1843 the Liberator planned a gigantic demonstration at Clontarf, which was to have been, in the Repeal movement, what the Dungannon Conference had been in Grattan's campaign for legislative independence.<sup>1</sup> But Peel, now in power, prohibited the meeting, sent troops to

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 96.

occupy the site, sent a fleet to guard the coast; and O'Connell, always resolute to avoid violence, submitted and cancelled the meeting. This ended his constitutional agitation. Nevertheless he was prosecuted for sedition, and condemned by a packed jury; the sentence was later scornfully reversed in the House of Lords. O'Connell's long ascendancy was over: henceforward the party of violence held the upper hand in Ireland.

Peel was too great a man to be content with a policy of mere repression: he made a serious attempt to grapple with some of Ireland's ills. In spite of a No-Popery outcry, he forced through Parliament a large grant to the Catholic seminary at Maynooth, and established non-sectarian Queen's Colleges at Belfast, Cork and Galway, to afford university education to Irishmen excluded from Trinity College, Dublin. And he appointed a Commission (the Devon Commission) to inquire into the Irish land problem; its report was the beginning of serious attention to the root cause of Irish discontent. But when Peel introduced a bill to give effect to some of the Commission's recommendations, it was strangled in the House of Lords as an invasion of the rights of property; even a Conservative ministry could not carry through that House the modest instalments of reform which it designed for Ireland. Yet Peel had shown a clearer sense of the realities of the Irish problem than the Whigs had ever displayed; and it is possible that, if Fate had permitted, he might have begun a real policy of amelioration.

But at this moment Ireland was struck by the most appalling disaster in all her piteous history. In 1845, and again in 1846, the potato crop failed. Half the population, living always on the very edge of starvation, were deprived of their only means of subsistence. Government did all that it could to meet the sudden crisis, and its efforts were supplemented by immense charitable funds raised in all the big British towns. But the catastrophe was too vast for any improvised remedies. Many thousands died of sheer starvation; thousands more poured out of the country, crowding into the slums of Liverpool, Glasgow and Manchester; other thousands thronged emigrant ships bound for the United States and Canada. The malady of over-population had begun to remedy itself in a very terrible way. There were 8,300,000 inhabitants in Ireland in 1845: when the census was taken in 1851 they had shrunk to 6,600,000, and this was only the beginning of a long process

of depopulation. No country of Western Europe has in modern times gone through such an agony as Ireland endured from 1845 to 1848. And the traces which it left were indelible. Every emigrant carried with him, when he said farewell to the Green Island, an inextinguishable bitterness. He wasted none of it on economic forces: it was all reserved for England.

An almost worse horror than the famine followed on its heels. The wretched cottiers were unable to pay their rents; and thousands of them were evicted from their cottages in order that their tiny patches of land, often cleared of stones and made cultivable by the endless toil of the outgoing tenant, might be combined into larger farms. A war began between landlord and tenant more relentless than anything that had gone before; and agrarian outrage became more prevalent than ever. The Liberals, again in power (though with a precarious majority) thought a Coercion Act necessary (1847): they got it without difficulty. But when they asked for power to control evictions and to secure compensation for improvements made by the tenant, their majority vanished.

Amid these horrors, the overwrought minds of the leaders of Young Ireland turned to violence and rebellion. *The United Irishman*, a paper run by a passionate young patriot, Mitchel, was filled with talk of pikes and barricades and bombs. Smith O'Brien, once O'Connell's comrade, went to Paris to ask for aid from the leaders of the 1848 Revolution. But the Irish '48 was a dismal failure. A hundred prospective rebels were arrested; Mitchel was sentenced to penal servitude; Smith O'Brien and two colleagues, who had gathered a band of armed men, were captured and transported. Order was restored; and Ireland, enfeebled and depopulated, sank back again into torpor, with one more bitter memory added to the long list that severed her from her partner-island. While Britain was beginning to find a way out of her troubles, Ireland's had become fivefold worse. As at every stage in British history, her tragic figure stood like a skeleton at a feast, rebuking self-complacency.

#### § 5. Cobden, Peel, and the Establishment of Free Trade.

Amid all their legislative activities, the Liberal ministries of 1832-41 had been markedly unsuccessful in two important spheres. They had been inefficient in administration, and especially in co-ordinating the work of the various depart-

ments of State; and they had been unsuccessful in the management of the national finances. In particular they had disappointed most of their followers by their failure to carry into effect the doctrines of the economists in regard to the freedom of foreign trade. These aspects of the work of reconstruction—administrative efficiency and fiscal reform—were left to Sir Robert Peel, and formed the outstanding achievements of his great ministry of 1841-1846.

In regard to fiscal reform, however, Peel was driven forward more rapidly than he could ever have anticipated by the pressure of a great public agitation carried on by the Anti-Corn-Law League. This organisation had been started by a group of Lancashire manufacturers in 1838, at the beginning of a period of exceptionally severe trade depression which lasted until 1843, and gave to 'the hungry Forties' their dismal appellation. The orators of the League argued that the Corn Laws were the chief cause of popular distress, by raising the price of food, by reducing everybody's purchasing power, and by discouraging the export of manufactured goods which would take place as a means of paying for imported corn. But though they made the Corn Laws the chief object of their attack, they preached with equal vehemence the necessity of universal Free Trade. The heart and soul of the agitation was Richard Cobden, a man of untiring zeal and genuinely unselfish devotion, and a master of lucid and persuasive exposition. With him was linked his intimate friend John Bright, the noblest and most winning British orator of the nineteenth century. From 1838 to 1846 these two, with an army of helpers, moved about the country preaching the doctrine of Free Trade as a sort of gospel, and a cure for every ill; as a sure path not only to national prosperity, but to peace among the nations. It was for them a moral as well as an economic question. In their unflinching belief in the virtue of unrestricted competition they went beyond even the orthodox economists. John Bright, the most compassionate of men, opposed Factory Acts on principle; and there was only one important economist of the nineteenth century who ever took this line. Cobden and Bright were the prophets of what came to be known as the Manchester School; but there was nothing novel in their doctrine save the whole-heartedness of its assertion that the free interchange of goods was not merely one of the roots, but the very tap-root, of national well-being. Like their economic antithesis, Karl Marx, they preached a materialist creed in an idealist

spirit : the Millennium was to be reached by buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest. The sheer force of their unwavering belief made their ideas the most potent factor in British politics for a generation to come.

When Peel came to power in 1841 the Anti-Corn-Law League was in full vigour ; carrying on its propaganda with such tireless energy, such ingenuity, and such persuasiveness, that the landowning class was gravely alarmed, and looked to Peel to avert what they believed would be utter ruin. Peel came to power as a Protectionist, and an opponent of the League. But his was an open and teachable mind ; as we shall see, it moved rapidly during the five years of his ministry ; and in the end it was Peel who carried Cobden's flag to victory.

Two features mainly distinguished this ministry, and made it a turning-point in British history. The first of these was Peel's administrative efficiency. No Prime Minister has ever excelled him in the specific work of a Prime Minister—that of keeping in touch with all departments of government, and ensuring that every question of national policy received the proper degree of cabinet attention. He brought the cabinet system to a pitch of perfection never equalled before or since : under him the cabinet worked as a team, and its collective responsibility was a reality.

But the outstanding feature of Peel's ministry, and his main contribution to the work of national reconstruction, was the far-reaching revision of the national system of finance which he carried out. He came to power at a time of acute commercial depression, and was faced by a serious deficit inherited from the Whigs. He found in existence a universal protective system, with a tariff that included duties on some 1200 separate articles, quite apart from the Corn Law, which submitted imported corn to a sliding scale of dues varying inversely with the home price. In 1842 he passed a new Corn Law with a reduced scale, which satisfied neither the League nor the country gentlemen. But his main achievement in this year was a remarkable Budget, wherein he imposed an income-tax in order to turn the deficit into a surplus, and then proceeded to abolish the duties on nearly 400 articles, and to make substantial reductions on the rest. Three years' experience showed him that he was getting a better yield from the reduced duties than from the higher ones, because greater cheapness encouraged the people to buy. Meanwhile the propaganda of the Anti-

Corn-Law League was going on more vigorously than ever ; and its arguments seemed to be justified by Peel's financial experience. Moreover it was being borne in upon him that it was no longer possible for Britain to be a self-supporting country ; and it was only as a means of enabling the country to support itself that the Corn Laws could be defended. Peel's views were definitely moving in Cobden's direction when the Irish Potato Famine suddenly came in the autumn of 1845, and made the very notion of excluding foreign corn, or discouraging its importation at the lowest possible rates, appear intolerable. The only rational course was to repeal the Corn Laws.

The announcement of Peel's conversion shattered his party. Deserted by some of his leading colleagues, he resigned ; but Lord John Russell, who had meanwhile declared for Free Trade, could not form a ministry, and Peel had to return to power. As in 1829, it fell to him to carry a fundamental change of policy which he had been pledged to oppose. The majority of his party, wild with fury, threw themselves into violent opposition under Lord George Bentinck and Benjamin Disraeli, who won their hearts by the unbridled invectives which they poured upon their erstwhile leader. It was only with the support of the Liberals that Peel could carry his proposals through the House of Commons ; but with their support he carried not only the repeal of the Corn Laws, but a Budget which greatly extended the reduction of the duties on other commodities, and in effect established general Free Trade. It might have been expected that the House of Lords would have resisted the repeal of the Corn Laws, which most of its members regarded as involving the ruin of the country and the final downfall of their own class. Yet they accepted it with extraordinary ease, thanks to the influence of the Duke of Wellington, who now, as in 1829, was convinced that it would be dangerous to resist a measure which he personally detested.

On the very night on which the Corn Bill passed the House of Lords, Peel was defeated in the Commons on an Irish Coercion Act, on which the revolting Tories voted with the Liberals. He was succeeded by a Liberal ministry under Lord John Russell which held office for six years, depending always upon the support of the group of progressive Conservatives who followed Peel. The Liberals were now whole-hearted Free Traders, and they carried still further the bold change of policy which Peel had begun. Notably,



in 1849, they repealed the Navigation Acts, which had been the keystone of British trade policy for two centuries. This was the final breach with the long tradition of trade-protection: Britain had become definitely and unmistakably a Free Trade country.

It is not our business to discuss the theoretical merits or defects of this policy. But there is no room for doubt that, in the circumstances of the time, it brought to Britain an immediate and rapid expansion of trade, and ended the long period of acute distress which had, with brief intervals, lasted since the close of the Napoleonic War. Three figures are enough to indicate its results. In 1815 the declared value of British exports was just under £50,000,000. Twenty-seven years later, when Peel began his attack on the Protective system, it had fallen to £47,250,000. But after another interval of twenty-seven years, in 1869, it had risen to £190,000,000. Nor did agriculture suffer, as might have been expected. The generation following 1815 had been a period of agricultural distress, which the Corn Laws had failed to remedy. The generation following 1846 was a period of agricultural revival; and it was not until the 'seventies, when the produce of the virgin lands of North America began to pour in on a large scale, that a new period of decline began. Distress and revolutionary agitation filled the generation between 1815 and 1850; prosperity and political quiescence distinguished the next generation. This contrast was due to many causes; but the most important among them was the new fiscal policy, which broke down the only barriers that prevented Britain from becoming the central market and workshop of the world.

#### § 6. *The Results of the Liberal Reconstruction.*

It is but a bald and arid summary which we have had space to give of the great changes which took place between 1830 and 1850; and their significance is apt to be obscured by the dryness of a catalogue of enactments. Seldom has any great society undergone within so short a time a greater change in structure and in spirit. In 1830 Britain was ruled by a privileged oligarchy; her whole social system was frostbound by prescription and rigid traditionalism; and her people, suffering bitter distresses, seemed to be on the eve of a blind and destructive upheaval. Without any violent disruption the entrenched power of the oligarchy was overthrown; the frost was melted without a burst;

and within twenty years the British people had entered upon an era of prosperity and contentment.

Two or three broad features emerge clearly from the detail of reforming activity which we have attempted to survey. The first of these, and the most important, was that the British people had regained the habit of self-government, and were engaged in creating new machinery for its exercise. Parliament had become representative, not yet of the whole nation, but of a very substantial part of the nation; and the old governing class, while it still retained its traditional leadership, had learnt that it was not its will but the nation's will (whenever it was clearly expressed) that must in the end prevail. Self-government had become real in the towns also, and they were using their power to regain some measure of decency and health. Even in the rural districts Boards of Guardians and Boards of Health were beginning, though in an imperfect way, to give expression to the common will.

The second broad feature of the period was that, while laying the utmost emphasis upon individual ability and energy as the chief creative force in human society, and while using (as in the new Poor Law) even harsh means of bringing home to every man the sense of individual responsibility, the British people were at the same time breaking away from the barren creed of *laissez faire*, and were accepting the principle that it is the duty of the community to protect the weak against the strong, and to compel all to observe certain minima of decency in their relations with their fellows. But in order to enforce these obligations a great departure in government was being made: a professional administrative class was being created to supervise in various ways the activities of individual citizens; and these agents of the national Government were beginning to interfere in the conduct of factories, mines, schools, and local governing bodies, in a way which the eighteenth century would never have contemplated.

On the other hand Britain was breaking away from her own traditions and the common practice of the modern world by abandoning the attempt to control through tariffs the movements of foreign trade. She had ceased to strive after the ideal of national self-sufficiency; she was content to depend for many essentials upon the process of interchange with other nations; she was inviting all the world to enter her markets freely, in the belief that, the more goods other people sent, the more goods they would be

bound to take in exchange. On the increasing intimacy in the relations of peoples which this process of interchange was likely to bring about, Britain was beginning to base sanguine hopes of growing peace and international fellowship; and the great International Exhibition of 1851, which ended this period, was hailed as the emblem and harbinger of an era of peaceful industry. Moreover, having abandoned her long-held belief in the possibility of drawing advantage from artificially enforced monopolies, Britain was entering, as we shall see, upon a new system of relationship with her daughter-lands, a relationship not based upon the cash-nexus.

Some of these hopes were to be justified by the course of events, others were to be falsified. But the acceptance of these new political conceptions, and their embodiment in laws and institutions, make this period one of the most momentous in British history.

[Walpole, *History of England from 1815*; Greville *Memoirs*; Dicey, *Law and Public Opinion in England*; Peel, *Memoirs*; Parker, *Sir R. Peel*; Walpole, *Life of Lord J. Russell*; Russell, *Recollections and Suggestions*; Morley, *Life of Cobden*; Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*; Disraeli, *Life of Lord G. Bentinck*; *Letters of Queen Victoria*; Mackay, *History of the English Poor Law*; Webb, *English Poor Law Policy*; Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*; Hodder, *Life of Shaftesbury*; Dunlop, *Life of O'Connell*; Duffy, *Young Ireland and My Life in Two Hemispheres*; Trevelyan, *The Irish Crisis*; Mill, *England and Ireland*.]

## CHAPTER IX

### THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT IN BRITAIN

(A.D. 1830-1850)

#### § 1. *The Character of the Movement and the First Attempt at Direct Action.*

THE legislative activity which we have surveyed in the last chapter was accompanied by a popular movement outside of Parliament, which aimed, not at the gradual adjustment of the existing social and political order, but at the establishment of a wholly new order, to be constructed in accordance with the vague and often contradictory theories of a group of revolutionary thinkers. For this reason it may rightly be described as a 'revolutionary' movement, in spite of the fact that most of those who took part in it, far from advocating or desiring any blind outburst of violence, were scrupulously constitutional in their methods.

The leaders of this movement drew their inspiration from the wholesome anger by which they were filled when they contemplated the miseries which a large proportion of the people were enduring; and from the equally wholesome conviction that the organised power of a civilised community ought to be capable of remedying these miseries. Their ideas were often crude and ill thought-out. They had little sense of the immense complexity of the living social organism which they wanted to carve into a new form. Their plans of reconstruction were very hazy, and many of them were too prone to imagine that all the ills of which they complained were merely due to the wickedness and selfishness of the master-class, and that, if the existing order were once destroyed, justice and plenty would come as surely as day follows night. For that reason they failed, and it was well that they failed; for their victory could have brought nothing but chaos and ruin. But their efforts were not wasted. They taught working people to think about and to work for the amelioration of their own lot by co-operative action; and they forced men of all classes to realise the existence of great evils, and the necessity for great reforms.

The movement captured the greater part of the working class, especially in the North of England; and its phrases and catchwords were almost universally adopted. At some moments there seemed to be a real danger of the most horrible form of civil war—a war of classes, a war of the ‘Have-nots’ against the ‘Haves,’ in which ideals would inevitably disappear in a brute struggle for material resources that could only lead to the destruction of the wealth which was fought for. This horrible conclusion was averted by three happy circumstances upon which the British people had a right to congratulate themselves. In the first place, most of the leaders of the movement were determined to avoid violence; in the second place, a free vent was given to discussion, and Government resisted, on the whole, the temptation to resort to mere repression; and, in the third place, the acute distresses which were the main cause of all the ferment were gradually amended by the working of the reconstructive measures which we have already outlined.

There was a great variety of doctrine and opinion among the social thinkers who won the ear of the working classes during these years. But most of it may be described as vaguely Socialist in character, and there were certain broad principles which were widely accepted as axiomatically true. The chief of these was that labour is the source of all wealth, a statement that is only valid if the term ‘labour’ be held to include directive and inventive ability; and these factors the revolutionary leaders were too apt to minimise or disregard. Even in this sense ‘labour’ is helpless without the use of stored-up wealth, or capital; and the revolutionary leaders seldom stopped to ask themselves how this wealth was to be made available unless those who stored it or saved it were encouraged by payment for doing so. The second axiom was that ‘labour’ has a right to the whole product of its toil; which was held by many unthinking men to mean that the manual labourers alone should share the product of industry. A third axiom was that, as Society was organised, the rich were daily becoming richer and the poor poorer, because the rich were compelling the poor to work for them for a bare subsistence allowance. The facts of the period seemed to support this doctrine; which was later adopted by Karl Marx, at a time when events were already proving it to be manifestly false. And the conclusion of the whole matter—a conclusion also adopted by Marx—was that the interests of the manual workers were

in conflict with those of all the rest of the community, and that a better state of things could only be attained by a class-war, a war of the wage-earners against the masters, and against the Government which the masters controlled.

As to the way in which this war should be conducted, and as to the use which should be made of victory, there were wide differences, and much hazy thinking. Some, notably the followers of Robert Owen, thought that the workers should disregard politics and try to organise a sort of co-operative communism for themselves. Others held that the workers, through their Unions, should, by the use of the strike weapon, destroy the power of capital and take possession of the factories for themselves; this was in some degree an anticipation of modern Syndicalism. But the great majority, attributing to Government the responsibility for the system under which they suffered, and crediting the State with a power little short of omnipotence, were bent upon seizing political control, as the necessary means for creating a new social order. It was from this line of thought that Chartism arose, reviving the old political programme of the Radicals. But, unlike the earlier Radicals, most of the Chartists never conceived of political equality as an end in itself, or adopted the doctrines of individualism. Democracy was for them the means to a social revolution. Ninety-nine of every hundred Chartists were believers in a vague, unanalysed Socialism, and looked to a democratic State to secure for them economic security and prosperity.

The ferment of revolutionary ideas was already at work from 1825 onwards, and in 1830, when the Whig Government came to power, it seemed to be menacing. The Reform agitation for a time diverted the current; but when the Reform Act came into operation, it proved to be a disappointment; and the revolutionary movement resumed its independent course. It now took the form of what may be called, in modern phraseology, a Syndicalist attempt to get control of the machinery of production by direct action. As early as 1830 the project of a general association of workpeople in all trades—a Trades Union as distinct from separate Trade Unions—had been set on foot in Manchester. This grandiose conception was put into operation on an elaborate scale when in January 1834 Robert Owen launched the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, and announced that great changes were about 'to come suddenly upon Society like a thief in the night.' All the working classes were to be included in a single vast organisation;

'all individual competition is to cease, all manufactures are to be carried on by National Companies.' The success of the scheme was at first impressive. Half-a-million members, including thousands of agricultural labourers and many women, joined in a few weeks, and an extraordinary epidemic of strikes broke out during the spring and summer.

The governing class was not unnaturally alarmed by these proceedings, but the Liberal Government refused, to its credit, to introduce repressive legislation like the Six Acts of 1819. Nevertheless in various places actions for conspiracy were brought by employers against their workpeople. The most iniquitous of these was the prosecution of six Dorsetshire agricultural labourers who had formed a lodge of the Trades Union in the village of Tolpuddle. They had administered an oath of secrecy to their members, and this was made the ground of a prosecution under an Act of 1797, which had been passed at the time of the Mutiny of the Nore to prevent secret conspiracies. The six labourers were sentenced to seven years' transportation, and, to the indelible shame of Lord Melbourne and the Liberal ministry, this monstrous sentence was carried out in spite of a rain of petitions and remonstrances. Nothing did more to alienate the working classes from the Government which they had helped to carry into power than this savage treatment of the Dorsetshire labourers. Two years later Government came to its senses again, pardoned the labourers, and brought them back from Australia. But the mischief had been done. The 'base bloody and brutal Whigs,' as one of the Chartist leaders later called them, had lost the confidence of working people.

Meanwhile the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union had collapsed as swiftly as it had risen. Its collapse was due, not to prosecutions, but to its own inherent weakness. The innumerable strikes which its establishment had encouraged were all unreheved failures. Its funds were exhausted. Before the end of the year it had sunk into complete discredit, and its failure had ruined the influence of Robert Owen. The first great experiment in Direct Action had come to nothing, and the leaders of revolution turned to new methods.

In the very year of the Grand National fiasco, the new Poor Law had been enacted, and this completed the discredit of the Liberal Government, and aroused the fierce anger of the working classes against the wielders of power who had been enthroned in 1832. To the average workman

the outstanding feature of the Act was that it treated poverty as a crime, and robbed him of the one source of help to which he had been accustomed to resort in times of distress, the one sign that the community recognised his right to the means of livelihood. For this apparent cruelty Government was directly and obviously responsible. To get control of Government seemed therefore the only pathway to a better order of things. Political action took the place of industrial action; and the Chartist movement was born. Its progress, like that of the Anti-Corn-Law League, was stimulated by the cycle of bad trade which began in 1837.

### § 2. *The First Phase of the Chartist Movement.*

Although it led to no immediate results, the Chartist movement was of momentous importance, because it was the first sustained movement in the modern world which was conducted by the working class. For ten years it kept Britain in a ferment of agitation and discussion. In conjunction with the contemporary propaganda of the Anti-Corn-Law League, it set on foot a nation-wide discussion such as had never been known before, and such as no European Government save the Liberal Government of 1832 would have permitted. It was a revolutionary movement, because it aimed at a complete recast of the social and political order. But in another sense it was anything but revolutionary. The most striking feature of the whole agitation was the sobriety and moderation with which it was on the whole conducted; and this was balanced by the restraint and absence of panic that marked the conduct of Government.

The roots of Chartism lay in the old Radical movement, in the Socialist propaganda of Owen, Thompson, Hodgskin and the rest, and in the Trade Union movement. It gathered all these into a focus, and drew strength also from the Ten Hours' agitation in the Northern factory towns, from the opposition to the Poor Law, from the fads and fancies of currency quacks like Attwood of Birmingham, from the activity of dissenting lay preachers, from the growing thirst for education, from the temperance movement, from every protest against injustice and every aspiration after public well-being that fermented in the minds of a restless and unhappy people. It became a sort of religion; it inspired an exalted fervour of belief; for a time every vague hope and project of reform was brought under the Chartist banner.



Though it had many ramifications, Chartism as Chartism definitely took its origin in 1836 and 1837, almost simultaneously in London, in Birmingham, and in Yorkshire. In London a group of self-educated artisans of the better class founded in 1836 the London Working Men's Association to agitate for democratic reform. The greatest man in this group was William Lovett, a cabinet-maker, and a man of real intellectual power, sound judgment, and single-minded devotion. It was he who played the main part in drafting the People's Charter, a draft bill which embodied the Six Points of Radicalism, universal suffrage, annual parliaments, secret ballot, equal electoral districts, the abolition of property qualifications, and payment of members. The Charter was published in May 1838, after consultation with some of the Radical members of Parliament; and it was decided to organise a vast petition in its favour from all parts of the country. Meanwhile, in Leeds, Feargus O'Connor, a hot-headed Irish landowner and a born rebel, had started an agitation on his own account: he had no patience with Lovett and his group, who were too moderate and restrained for his taste. In November 1837 O'Connor founded the *Northern Star*, which became the central organ of the Chartist movement. In May of the same year the Birmingham Political Union, which had played so active a part in the Reform Bill agitation,<sup>1</sup> was revived by its founder, Thomas Attwood. It was in Birmingham that the petition was drawn up. It included only five of the Six Points, for Attwood would have nothing to do with equal electoral districts. From these beginnings the agitation spread with extraordinary swiftness during 1838. Mass meetings were held in all the industrial districts. New leaders appeared, fiery orators such as the dissenting parson J. R. Stephens, trenchant journalists such as the Irishman Bronterre O'Brien. The whole country seemed to take flame. To focus the movement it was decided to summon a National Convention, to which delegates were elected by huge mass meetings in all parts of the country; while (in imitation of O'Connell's methods in Ireland) a National Rent was to be raised.

The Convention met in London in February 1839, in Westminster Palace Yard, close by the Houses of Parliament. What would Pitt or Castlereagh have said to the assemblage of a body under such a title, in such a place? Fortunately the precedents of Pitt and Castlereagh had

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 377.

been discarded ; and the Convention was allowed to meet and carry on its discussions without interference. From the outset there appeared a sharp conflict between two parties among the Chartists. All were agreed on the presentation to Parliament of the great petition for which signatures were being collected by the hundred thousand. But what should happen if, as was to be expected, the petition was rejected by Parliament? Lovett and his friends were for continuing the methods of peaceful agitation and education. But Feargus O'Connor and most of the men from the North were for violent action ; for the immediate declaration of a universal strike ; for the arming of the people, and the raising of barricades in the continental fashion. And there is no doubt that the physical force party was numerous. The *Northern Star* was threatening blood and thunder. A series of articles on revolutionary tactics, by a Polish exile, appeared in the *London Democrat*. Pamphlets giving detailed instructions for the construction of barricades were openly on sale. Pikes were being made, and old muskets furbished up.

Yet Government remained quiet ; there was no interference with the *Northern Star* or other advocates of violence, there were no prosecutions for seditious language, even when the more violent orators urged excited mass meetings to arm themselves. Though it was denounced for its supineness, Government preferred to trust to the inherent sanity and good sense of the British people. 'The people have a right to meet,' Lord John Russell said, a month after the assembly of the Convention. 'If they had no grievances, common sense would put an end to their meetings. It is not from free discussion that governments have anything to fear. There was fear when men were driven by force to secret combinations. *There was the fear, there was the danger, and not in free discussion.*' But, of course, precautions had to be taken against the real danger of a rising in force. Troops were drafted into the North of England ; but they were warned to avoid chances of conflict. They were placed under the command of Sir Charles Napier, a generous-minded man who sympathised with the grievances from which Chartism had sprung, and who was determined to avoid bloodshed if it were possible to do so. Some of the Chartists misinterpreted the quiescence of the troops, attributing it to fear : Napier took some of them in a friendly manner to see the guns, and showed them the hopelessness of any violent outbreak. Sanity prevented the explosion

which a spark might have caused. The explosion would have failed ; but it would have caused far-reaching ruin, and left a heritage of bitterness.

In May, 1839, the Convention transferred its sittings to Birmingham. Here the physical force party definitely got the upper hand, and passed fiery resolutions demanding a national strike, the withdrawal of all gold from the banks, and the arming of the people for revolt. Riots broke out in the town ; several of the leading Chartists were arrested ; and for a few days the military had to take control. These disturbances were, in Napier's opinion, due to hasty and panic-struck action on the part of the magistrates. They showed how easily disorder might have broken out if the forces of order had not been generally handled with temper and restraint.

In July the great petition, with its 1,250,000 signatures, was laid before Parliament by Attwood of Birmingham. It was quite seriously discussed, and rejected by 235 votes to 46. What should the Convention do now ? Its members realised the hopelessness of armed revolt. They tried to call a general strike, but there was little response. Some hundreds of the more vehement spirits were arrested in various parts of the country, and soon afterwards released ; this probably prevented outbreaks, and broke up the secret organisation which seems to have been formed by a group of extremists. Only in South Wales was a futile little insurrection attempted, when some 3000 Chartists armed with muskets and pikes marched on Newport, with the intention of releasing the orator Vincent, who was imprisoned there. They were dispersed by a single volley of musketry ; and the great agitation of 1839 came to an end. Assuredly there was no other country in Europe where a revolutionary movement would have been given so much rope, or where it could have been so quietly extinguished. Freedom of discussion is the best prophylactic against violence.

### § 3. *The Later Phases of the Chartist Movement.*

The failure of 1839 did not put a stop to the Chartist movement. The People's Charter still represented an ideal, a Utopia, to thousands of honest men, and the rejection of the great petition by Parliament was taken as a proof that the rulers of the country cared nothing for the sufferings of the People. A National Charter Association was founded to keep the agitation in being, and there was some activity

at elections, especially in the General Election of 1841, when all the strength of the Chartists was thrown against the Liberals. But there were deep divisions among the leaders, and the history of the movement is largely filled with their disputes.

In 1842, which was a year of exceptionally acute distress, the movement once again became very lively. A second petition was drawn up. It was far bolder in its terms than the first, claiming the franchise as a 'natural and inalienable right,' but laying the main emphasis no longer upon political but upon social demands. Signed by no less than 3,300,000 persons, it was, like its predecessor, introduced in the House of Commons, and rejected by an immense majority. Among the few who voted in its favour was Richard Cobden, whom most Chartists regarded as a representative and spokesman of the hated capitalist class.

As in 1839, the rejection of the Charter was followed by disturbances. A national strike was proclaimed; and for some weeks in the autumn it was almost effective in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Some of the Chartist leaders were for organising a rebellion. But the policy of physical force had now few supporters, and the most striking feature of the strike was its orderly character. The general strike failed, as it was bound to fail. But it gravely alarmed the Government—now the Conservative Government of Sir Robert Peel. In their anxiety, Government forgot the restraint which the Liberal Government had preserved in 1839, when the danger of open revolt had been far greater. Wholesale arrests were made, perhaps as many as 1500 in all; nearly all the Chartists and Trade Union leaders were laid by the heels. Some 500 were sentenced to terms of imprisonment; 79 were transported to Australia. But these disproportionate sentences were unnecessary. The movement had already broken down.

With the disaster of 1842 Chartism practically collapsed. Only a few thousand remained members of any formal Chartist organisation. There were miserable quarrels and suspicions among the leaders. The cause was a dying cause; and soon a real revival of trade extinguished it. The final flicker took place in 1848, when the success of the revolution in France galvanised the torpid movement. Once more there were mass meetings and colossal demonstrations. Once more a National Convention was elected, and a petition drawn up for signature. Feargus O'Connor took the lead, and there was talk of establishing a democratic republic with

O'Connor as its president. There was much violent declamation, with which nobody interfered, and much secret buying of arms. It was decided that this third petition should be taken to Parliament at the head of a vast armed procession; and April 10 was fixed for the great day. Government drafted troops to London, and enrolled thousands of special constables. The organisers were told that there was no objection to their holding a meeting, but that the procession to Parliament would not be permitted. The meeting was held. The leaders, losing heart, dismissed it, and took the petition to Parliament in three cabs. It was claimed that more than 5½ million signatures had been obtained. But the actual number was less than two million, and vast numbers of these were false. The ridicule aroused by these discoveries pricked the bubble of the feverish and unreal excitement of 1848. Chartism had been dying since 1842; the final episode snuffed out its guttering flame. And the working classes of Britain turned away from the methods of revolution, and devoted themselves henceforward to more practical and profitable methods of achieving the great reforms for which they rightly thirsted. By doing so they trained themselves in the arts of self-government, and prepared themselves for democracy, which was to come, in less than twenty years, not by way of revolution or even as the result of violent agitation, but as a natural and easy development.

#### § 4. *The Indirect Results of Chartism*

Chartism passed away, but not without producing a deep effect upon the generation which saw its rise and fall. It had done much to educate the working people; it did yet more to educate the more prosperous classes and the leaders of thought.

The stir of emotion which it produced had profound effects upon the literature of the period. Hood's *Song of the Shirt* and Mrs. Browning's *Cry of the Children* express a new spirit of compassionate indignation at the sufferings of the victims of the industrial machine; and the same spirit is perceptible in many novels of the period. The distress and agitation of the poor, the Chartist movement itself, became the subject-matter of great novels; Disraeli's *Sibyl*, Mrs. Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, Charles Kingsley's *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* are only the most outstanding examples in this kind. Carlyle, now becoming the accepted prophet-voice of his time, turned his stormy eloquence upon what he

called 'the condition of England question,' in *Chartism and Past and Present*; and though he had no clearer guidance to give than any other as to the true pathway out of distress, at least he denounced mere *laissez faire*, and trumpeted the need of constructive work for the re-establishment of national health.

Even John Stuart Mill, now the hereditary chief of what remained of the Benthamite sect, the chief expounder of orthodox economics and an acknowledged prophet of Liberalism, was driven by the discussions of the period and by the spectacle of public misery and resentment, to a position far indeed from that of the orthodox *laissez faire* doctrine of the 'twenties. In his *Political Economy*, published in 1848—a book which henceforth became the standard of Liberal orthodoxy—he urged that the iron laws of economic science apply only to the process of production, and that it was for the community to seek justice in the distribution of the wealth which it produced. And in considering how this justice was to be attained, he went far in the direction of Socialism, advocating legislation for the equalisation of wealth and the limitation of the right of bequest; in his later years he practically became an advocate of land nationalisation. It would be a mistake, no doubt, to attribute this striking change in the trend of economic thought wholly or even mainly to the influence of the Chartist movement. But it was beyond question hastened by the deep sense of the injustices of the existing social order which the Chartist agitation drove into the minds of that generation.

Again, it was from the Chartist movement that the direct impetus came which produced the teachings of the little group of Christian Socialists—F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Thomas Hughes, J. M. Ludlow—who drew much of their inspiration from Coleridge. They were able to achieve very little directly. But they supplied a new element of vitality in the life and in the work of the Church of England, and a new strain in the variegated texture of the liberalism of that age.

Finally it was from Chartism that the Tories, through their future leader Disraeli, derived the conception of a new line of advance. In the debate on the first Chartist petition Disraeli had declared that though he disapproved of the Charter, he sympathised with the Chartists. 'The Chartists,' he said, 'are in hostility against the middle classes, they make no attack on the aristocracy nor on the Corn Laws; they attack the new class, but not the old.' Here was the

germ of the idea which was to be the inspiration of Disraeli's Young England party, and ultimately of Tory democracy—the idea that the old aristocracy should place itself at the head of democracy to fight against the iniquities of industrialism and the dominance of the middle class.

Chartism failed to achieve its immediate aims, and it was well that it failed; for the sudden enthronement of an untrained democracy would assuredly have led to many evils, as it did in France. But though it failed, Chartism profoundly modified the outlook and aims of every party and school of thought in the British society. In a free society in which the movement of opinion is allowed free play, no honest beliefs, no sincere and zealous advocacy of reforms, will ever be wholly fruitless. If it can resist the temptation to resort to the unconvincing argument of brute force, it will not fail of its effect.

[Beer, *History of British Socialism*; Podmore, *Life of Owen*; S. and B. Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*; Hovell, *History of Chartism*; West, *Chartism*; Lovett, *Autobiography*.]

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW COLONIAL POLICY

(A.D. 1830-1855)

#### § 1. *The Sources of the New Colonial Policy : the Radical Imperialists.*

GREAT as were the changes which were brought about in Britain during the twenty years following 1830, they were less striking than the revolution in colonial policy which was effected in the same period. The methods of the old colonial policy, which had been observed since 1660, were finally cast aside ; the foundations of the modern Commonwealth were laid ; and the two guiding principles which have moulded the modern history of the Commonwealth were clearly established. The first of these is the principle that progressive and civilised communities are entitled to the fullest degree of self-government, and to the most complete responsibility for shaping their own destinies. The second is the principle that backward peoples, unfit for self-government, must not be exploited for the advantage of the ruling race, as they had too often been during all the earlier history of European colonisation ; but that the controlling Power must regard itself as standing in the relation of a trustee for the interests of its subjects. These two principles have not always been easy to reconcile ; indeed, as we shall see, they have sometimes come into violent conflict ; and in the West Indies, in South Africa, in New Zealand—wherever, indeed, white men and backward peoples live side by side—this conflict of principles has been the chief source of difficulty. But it is the acceptance and the application of these principles which have given to the history of the Commonwealth its chief significance and value ; and it is necessary to understand how and why they came to be adopted during these years before we turn to study their effects in the history of the various colonies.

The new policy in regard to the backward peoples was the outcome of the missionary and humanitarian movement, on which we have already dwelt.<sup>1</sup> This policy won its supreme triumph with the abolition of slavery in 1833—

<sup>1</sup> Above, Chap. iv. p. 341.



the first important enactment of the reformed Parliament. The Act provided that after a brief period of apprenticeship every slave in the British Empire should be emancipated; and the immense sum of £20,000,000 was provided at the cost of the British taxpayer to compensate the owners of the slaves for the loss thus inflicted upon them. In view of the load of debt and the economic distress from which Britain was suffering, this was a truly magnanimous act of national reparation, to which it would be hard to find a parallel. But it should not be forgotten that in passing this Act the Imperial Parliament was overriding the powers of self-government which some of the slave-owning colonies possessed. Left to themselves, Jamaica and Barbados would never willingly have freed their slaves; and in legislating over their heads the mother-country was going far beyond any exercise of sovereign power which she had ever displayed in the struggle with the American colonies. Here, at the very outset of the new era, the principle of colonial self-government and the principle of protection for backward peoples came into sharp conflict.

The new policy in regard to colonies mainly peopled by progressive and civilised inhabitants was due to more complex causes. In part it was the outcome of the reigning economic ideas of the time; in part it was due to a belief, widely held in Britain as on the continent, that colonial possessions were not worth the trouble and cost they involved. But it is the greatest of blunders to assume that the new policy was wholly due to indifference. The main influence in the formulation of the new policy was a body of doctrine strongly held and eagerly pressed by a group of enthusiasts.

The essential foundation of the Old Colonial System had been the regulation of inter-imperial trade. This regulation was conceived, not in the interest of the mother-country alone, but in the interest of all the members of the empire. But it was necessarily defined by the Imperial Parliament, as the central legislative body of the empire; and this involved a considerable degree of interference with the life of all the colonies. The system received its death-blow with the triumph of the economic doctrines of Adam Smith and his followers. Adam Smith had argued that the expectation of wealth based upon a monopoly of colonial trade was wholly fallacious; he had even gone so far as to assert that 'Great Britain derives nothing but loss from the dominion which she exercises over her colonies.' The school

of Adam Smith achieved its triumph when Free Trade was established by Peel's budgets of 1842-6; and the system of colonial monopoly was finally extinguished when, in 1849, the Liberals repealed the Navigation Acts, which had been regarded as the corner-stone of British imperial policy. Henceforward Britain claimed no power of forcing colonial trade into the channels she desired; and the traders of all nations were admitted to her colonial markets (so far as she controlled them) on equal terms with the traders of the mother-country.

But in the judgment of most men the logical inference from these doctrines was that colonies were not worth acquiring or maintaining; and men of most schools of thought held that the existing colonies should be encouraged and assisted to go their own way as rapidly as possible, and that no new colonies should be established. Disraeli expressed the view of most Tories when he said in 1852 that the colonies were no better than 'millstones round our necks.' The Radicals of the Manchester School were of the same opinion. The Chartists of the working class took no interest in colonial questions. There was thus a widespread indifference about the colonies which certainly facilitated the rapid development of colonial self-government. What was more important, this indifference left the field clear for the small group of enthusiasts to whom the definition of the new colonial policy was mainly due.

For the new policy was not the result of mere indifference or of drift. It was the outcome of hard thinking and tireless work by a small group of zealous and able men, mostly drawn from among the more advanced Liberals: they may be described as the Radical Imperialists, the ancestors of Dilke and of Chamberlain. They never numbered more than a handful; but they changed the course of their country's history, and shaped the character of the modern British Commonwealth. History presents few more striking examples of the results that can be attained, in a free society, by the persistent efforts of a few men fired by great ideas.

Their policy had two sides. On the one hand they saw Britain filled with a crowded population which was suffering from many ills, while vast and fertile lands under British control lay empty, waiting to be turned to advantage by human strength and skill. Systematic and scientific colonisation seemed to them to be the only remedy for this double evil; but systematic colonisation would only be possible if

it were wisely directed, and if the empire were treated as a unity. On the other hand, being convinced Liberals, they had a sincere belief in the virtues of self-government, and a profound mistrust of the increasingly tight control exercised by the Colonial Office. Against this deadening bureaucracy they opened the vials of their sarcasm, not always quite fairly: Charles Buller, in particular, scarified Sir James Stephen and the Colonial Office in his mordant satire upon the pedantries of 'Mr. Mother-Country.' But they neither expected nor desired that the colonies would shake off the connexion with the mother-country: this would have defeated their plans of scientific colonisation. They rather looked forward to the planting of British institutions in the daughter-lands as the link which would bind together a fellowship of free peoples, united by ties of sentiment, of tradition and of interest. They were the prophets and designers of the British Commonwealth in its twentieth-century form.

The chief inspirer of this remarkable group was Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a Benthamite Radical who, being a man of energy and ideas, would probably in normal circumstances have made a name in British politics. But in 1826 his career had apparently been ruined by a disreputable adventure: he had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment in Newgate for abducting an heiress from school and persuading her to marry him. This episode closed to Wakefield the possibility of a political career in Britain: indeed, it was not until 1849 that he ventured to put his disgraced name upon the title-page of any of his books, and no Government ever dared to employ him. But while he was in gaol, in the hope of making a fresh start in a new land, he had devoured every book about the colonies which he could obtain. As he read, personal aims were swamped by the enthusiasm of a great idea. When he was released he founded (1830) a Colonisation Society, in which he gathered about him a group of men whom he infected with his own enthusiasm. Chief among them was Lord Durham, the 'Radical Jack' of the Reform Act, who was later to take Wakefield with him to Canada, and there to work out the classic exposition of one side of their creed. With them were Sir William Molesworth and Charles Buller, two very able young Liberals who were to make their mark in the House of Commons. These four were the chief inspirers of the new colonial school. But some of the more outstanding Liberal statesmen, notably Lord John Russell and Lord

Howick (later the third Earl Grey) were deeply influenced by their ideas ; and John Stuart Mill, now the chief prophet of the Benthamites, gave them his hearty backing.

Wakefield's own main contribution to the theory of colonisation was a plan for overcoming the two main difficulties which stood in the way of successful settlement. If colonial land were given away freely, every man would desire to possess his own land, without considering whether he could command either the capital or the labour necessary for working it, and much of the land thus occupied would lie derelict. Again, if emigration were left to chance, many desirable emigrants would be unable to pay the cost of transit. Wakefield's plan was that Government should only sell colonial land at a good price, and that the proceeds should be spent in defraying the cost of helping emigrants who would work on the land of others till they could save enough to buy land of their own. By such a method the mother-country and the colonies would become 'partners in a new industry, the creation of happy human beings ; one country furnishing the raw material, that is the land—the dust of which man is made ; the other furnishing the machinery, that is, men and women to convert the unpeopled soil into living images of God.' It was his belief that 'in this honourable and glorious co-partnership, the interest of the mother-country would be greater than that of the colony, and a rupture of their relations would be most injurious to the former.' Wakefield's theories were never fully applied ; but they were nearly realised in the settlement of South Australia and New Zealand, and they influenced the land systems of other colonies.

The doctrines of this able group of men on colonial self-government obtained their clearest expression in *Durham's Report on Canada*, which is a classic treatise not only on Canadian problems, but on colonial policy as a whole. 'It is not by weakening but by strengthening the influence of the people on its government—by confining within much narrower bounds, and not by extending, the interference of the imperial authorities in the details of colonial affairs—that harmony is to be restored where dissension has so long prevailed.' In these words Durham expressed, with faith and courage, the fundamental doctrine of the Commonwealth. Like Burke in 1775 he appealed to 'the spirit of the British constitution' as the cure for grave political maladies : 'it needs but to follow out consistently the principles of the British constitution,' he insisted ; and,

unlike Burke, he and his fellows did not preach in vain. They believed also that in this policy lay the one hope of maintaining imperial unity. They held that ties of the old rigid kind were both fragile and irritating, and that a far stronger bond would be found in a common pride in the same institutions and traditions of liberty. This conviction inspires every page of Durham's Report; it inspires Wakefield's bold project for the government of South Australia;<sup>1</sup> it is to be found also in the speech in which, in 1850, Lord John Russell introduced a bill empowering the Australian colonies to frame their own constitutions, and in the despatch in which, in 1855, he welcomed the new system they had established. The dream of Burke was to come true; the British Commonwealth was to be held together not by trade regulations, and not by the 'letters of office and instructions' of a Colonial Secretary, but by 'ties which, though light as air, are as strong as links of iron'; by the 'participation of freedom, that sole bond, which originally made, and must still preserve, the unity of the Empire.'

In tracing the history of the individual colonies through this critical and formative period, we shall see at work the powerful moulding ideas which we have attempted to analyse, but we shall see them working with different effects in different colonies. We shall first consider those colonies—the West Indies and South Africa—wherein backward peoples were numerous, and wherein, for that reason, the predominant influence was that of the missionaries, backed by all the authority of the Colonial Office. In these lands the colonial reformers of the Wakefield school took little interest. They found their principal field in the great empty lands to which we shall later turn, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. But in all the colonies alike we shall see the influence of the new economic policy—the abandonment of any attempt to enforce a regulated system of inter-imperial trade.

### § 2. *The Tropical Colonies of the West.*

There is no more pointed illustration of the contrast between the colonial policy of the eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth than is afforded by the West Indies and West Africa. The West Indies had been the pride of the old colonial system, the main pillar of the empire's trade. No part of the empire had drawn greater profit from the system of trade regulation and monopoly; while the traffic

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 440.

with West Africa had brought an abundant supply of cheap labour. The riches and greatness of the West Indies had in truth rested upon an artificial and unhealthy basis; they had been built up on slavery and protection. And when slavery was abolished and protection was replaced by free trade, the West Indies sank into relative insignificance, by a transition as painful as it was abrupt; while West Africa practically ceased to have any value. In short, to these colonies the new colonial policy brought nothing but ruin; and the planters bitterly felt that they were being made the victims of humanitarian fads on the one hand, and of new-fangled economic theories on the other.

Blow after blow was struck at the foundations of their well-being: first the abolition of the slave-trade; then the competition of beet-sugar grown in Europe; then, worst of all, the abolition of slavery. Compensation was, indeed, paid for the emancipated slaves, but only at the rate of £19 a head, and the market price averaged £35. This meant bankruptcy for many. And the freed slaves—habituated to live on a bare minimum, which the tropical soil easily produced—showed no eagerness to work. Many plantations had to be left derelict, because the labour necessary for working them could not be obtained. A final blow came with the establishment of Free Trade, when Britain admitted to her markets, on the same terms as West Indian sugar, the sugar grown in Brazil and other colonies where slavery still existed. This was the cruellest stroke of all. The West Indian planters felt they had been betrayed: they were not only ruined and disheartened, they were seriously disaffected to the home Government. And they had a real grievance. The system under which they had thriven was bad and unhealthy; it had to disappear. But it had been created by the deliberate policy of the home Government, steadily pursued during nearly two centuries; and the victims of a sudden change of policy might reasonably urge that no sufficient thought had been given to the difficult problem of building up a new and healthier system.

Under the new order yet another difficulty emerged. The white residents in the West Indies could not easily abandon their long-accustomed ascendancy, or the methods of government they had employed, when they found themselves at the mercy of an overwhelming majority of negroes, now free men, but illiterate, debased by long usage of slavery, and full of resentful memories. The white settlers in Jamaica, Barbados and the Leeward Islands still possessed

self-governing powers ; but the exercise of these powers was attended by real dangers, and was regarded with distrust by the home Government. Friction with the Colonial Office was incessant in all the self-governing islands ; in the other islands no progress towards self-government was permitted ; and in the next era even the older colonies were to submit to large restrictions upon their autonomy.<sup>1</sup> The principle of self-government was at war with the principle of protection for backward peoples.

To the West Indies, at any rate, the new colonial policy seemed to have brought nothing but ruin ; impoverishment, stagnation and disheartenment were the lot of the islands which had once been the proudest of British possessions. Evidently the pathway of humanitarianism in colonial policy was a stony one, beset with many thorns. One thing alone had been gained. The canker of slavery had been eradicated. But it had left its poison behind.

### § 3. *South Africa the Native Problem and the Great Trek.*

In South Africa, as in the West Indies, the greatest difficulties arose from the fact that a white minority dwelt among an overwhelming majority of backward peoples whom they were accustomed to regard as inferiors and to employ as slaves. But the problem was infinitely more complex than that of the West Indies. In addition to the slave population (who were nearly as numerous as their masters) there was a still larger population of free negroes, warlike, virile and aggressive. And the bulk of the white population consisted of the Dutch Boers, who were separated from their British rulers by barriers of race and language, and even more by the fact that they still adhered to the view of the relation between white men and their coloured subjects which every Englishman had accepted without question in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Boers regarded their negro neighbours as Sons of Ham, natural slaves, with no claims to civil rights ; the British, or at any rate the missionaries and the Colonial Office, were inclined to claim for the negro an absolute equality with the white man before the law.

It was indeed this difference of view as to the right mode of treating backward peoples which forbade harmony between the two European peoples on whom the destiny of

<sup>1</sup> See below, Bk. x. chap. v. p. 535.

South Africa depended; and the humanitarian doctrine, which the British had only adopted during the last generation, was the root cause of the friction that brought so many troubles. The problem of attaining harmony between the Dutch and the British, if it had stood alone, would no doubt have presented difficulties; but it would have been solved, as the corresponding problem was solved in Canada, by the exercise of self-government. The co-existence of the native problem forbade this solution; for the home Government, unwilling to leave the subject peoples at the mercy of a white minority, withheld self-governing powers. Until 1833 the colony was under the despotic rule of a Governor; and even in 1833 his power was only qualified by the addition of a small nominated Legislative Council. Behind the Governor was the Colonial Office, which left him little discretion. And the Colonial Office was in this period completely under the influence of the missionaries: the Secretary of State, Lord Glenelg, and the permanent head of the office, Sir James Stephen, were both fervent Evangelicals, who looked at all South African questions through the eyes of the missionaries. They regarded the protection of the native peoples as their first duty; and they were too ready to assume that in any difference between white men and black, the white men were sure to be in the wrong.

Now there is no doubt that the missionaries had earned a right to be heard. With admirable courage they had made their way among many savage tribes, and had begun to exercise over some of them a real civilising influence. Dreading the effects upon their flocks of contact with the white man, they wanted to keep them as far as possible aloof from every white influence save their own; and this became in a large degree the policy of the British Government. But it is clear that the missionaries conveyed a false impression of the character of the South African natives; and that they also created an unhappy prejudice against the Boer farmers, against whom they wrote with extreme bitterness. In particular, a book published in 1829 by Dr. Philip, Superintendent of the London Missionary Society at Cape Town, did more than any other single cause to produce misunderstanding between the two white races. The Boers were slave-owners, and no doubt they were often brutal and harsh, like all pioneers in a wild land. But the Kaffirs were far indeed from being innocent and inoffensive victims of the white man's greed, as they were pictured by the sedentary officials of the Colonial Office. They were



just as aggressive as the Boers ; and it was the wildest nonsense to imagine that, left to themselves, they would live in peace. The Kaffirs were the advance-guard of the warlike Bantu peoples who had long been pressing southwards from Central Africa, and they incessantly raided and harried the eastern frontiers of Cape Colony. There had been Kaffir wars in 1779, in 1789, in 1799 ; and even since the British occupation two formidable Kaffir invasions had taken place, in 1812 and 1819. Behind the Kaffirs were the still fiercer Zulus ; away in the north, far beyond the limits of the colony, were the savage Matabele ; and the incessant warfare in which these peoples spent their time was so murderous that it is estimated that at least 1,000,000 human beings had been slaughtered by Zulu and Matabele in the first generation of the nineteenth century. Boer farmers, dwelling in scattered homesteads, knew too well the dangers that threatened them from these ferocious warriors to regard with any patience the sentimental view of the home Government. They felt that they were unjustly used, and that their interests were uniformly disregarded for the sake of savages whom they both hated and despised. In truth, the Boers' view of the native tribes was nearer the truth than Glenelg's and Stephen's : the Bantu peoples were incapable of living in peace except under compulsion ; and the one hope of quietude for South Africa was firm government such as only white men could organise.

Already this difference of view as to the treatment of natives had produced serious trouble. In 1815 a farmer at Schlachter's Nek had refused to obey a summons issued by a district court at the instance of one of his own Hottentots ; an attempt to arrest him brought about a little revolt, in which lives were lost ; and the episode rankled, as a sign that the British Government was taking the side of the blacks. But in 1834 two events took place which brought relations between the Dutch farmers and the British Government to the breaking-point.

The first of these was the compulsory emancipation of all slaves by the edict of the distant British Parliament. The abolition of slavery was a noble act ; but it could not seem so to the Dutch. For two centuries they had practised a system of domestic slavery widely different from the cruel plantation-slavery of the West Indies ; and they regarded the system as both natural and of divine ordinance. What increased their anger was that the compensation offered them was quite inadequate : the value of the South African

slaves was estimated at £3,000,000 ; the compensation available was only £1,250,000. And the freed slaves drifted into vagrancy, could not be got to work, and became a nuisance and a danger.

Emancipation by itself, however, would not have led to an irreparable breach. Far more serious was the British Government's treatment of the Kaffir problem. At the end of 1834, when the exasperation about emancipation was at its height, the Kaffirs made the most formidable incursion that had yet been recorded. Along a line extending fifty miles inland from the sea, 12,000 fighting men burst over the frontiers, burning farm-houses, killing the farmers, and driving off cattle. Fortunately an able Governor, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, had recently assumed office. He drove back the invaders, annexed the area beyond the Fish River,<sup>1</sup> and organised it as a frontier-province, leaving the Kaffirs undisturbed so long as they behaved peaceably (1835). It was a sound settlement. The Boer farmers felt that Government was at last dealing sensibly with a real danger.

But the home Government, inspired by some of the missionaries, took a different view. Lord Glenelg, sitting at ease in London, could not believe that the Kaffirs were the 'merciless barbarians' whom D'Urban's despatches described ; for him they were the victims of 'systematic injustice,' driven by despair to 'extort by force that redress which they could not otherwise obtain.' Accordingly he cancelled D'Urban's annexation (1835), withdrew the frontier to the old line, and recalled the vigorous Governor (1837). Upon which the Dutch farmers, already sore about the emancipation of their slaves, came to the conclusion that the British Government could not be trusted even to protect their lives and their cattle against their savage neighbours, and resolved in large numbers that they had better abandon their homes, and move out into the wilderness, where they would at least be free to protect themselves. Thus an obstinate sentimentalist in London, inspired by a generous but misguided view of his duty, brought about the crucial event which has determined the subsequent history of South Africa—the Great Trek of the Boer farmers (1836).

We do not know the number of the voluntary exiles who began to pour out of Cape Colony in the spring of 1836 : the total has been variously estimated from 5000 to 10,000 ; in any case they were a small proportion of the Dutch population of the colony. They set forth in small parties, with

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (b), 6th Edition Plate 89 (b),

their families and belongings in tented wagons, driving their cattle before them ; and thus began the most extraordinary and heroic Odyssey in modern history.<sup>1</sup> There was very little organisation or leadership in the movement ; the parties joined and separated again in a confusing way ; and they never succeeded in establishing any effective central government. But for all that, they achieved astounding things. Passing northwards, over the Orange River, they moved on into the northern part of what later became the Orange Free State ; some of them pressed onwards as far as the Zoutpansberg, in the north of the Transvaal. All this rolling upland country, eminently suited for the pastoral life which the Boers loved, was nearly empty ; but it was under the sovereignty of the fierce Matabele warriors of the chief Mosilikatze. With grim resolution the farmers faced and defeated Mosilikatze's hosts, and drove him beyond the Vaal, and even beyond the Limpopo. They had broken a powerful savage empire (1837) ; and at Winburg, whose name commemorated their victory, they established the centre of a new free republic, laying down a simple constitution which included a significant prohibition of all dealings with the London Missionary Society. But the constitution did not establish any effective central authority. The scattered groups of settlers, especially those who were thinly spread over the vast area of the Transvaal, went their own ways, uncontrolled.

It was a wide and rich land which they had acquired, substantially larger than England and Wales. But this did not content the wanderers, bitten now by the gadfly of adventure, and torn asunder by jealousies between rival leaders. To the east of their main settlement, beyond the Drakensberg Mountains, lay the beautiful land of Natal, left almost empty by the ravages of the Zulus. A few British traders who had settled on the coast at Durban had vainly petitioned the Government at Cape Town for the annexation of these lands. In 1838, after a promise of friendship from the Zulu king, Dingaan, a band of Boers came down into Natal. But a large party of them were treacherously murdered by the Zulus on the Tugela River, at Weenen, 'the place of weeping.' The brave Boers refused to be driven out. With some help from the few British settlers, they made war against the terrible Zulus, broke their military power at the battle of the Blood River (1838), and enthroned a new Zulu king as a vassal of their own (1840).

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (d), 6th Edition Plate 89 (a),

Natal became, for a short season, the second main centre of the wanderers, with Pieter-Maritzburg as their capital. Within three years this handful of untrained farmers had broken two great savage empires, and won for themselves a wide and rich domain.

The British Government had watched these events with bewilderment and misgiving. The Boers were still technically subjects of the British Crown. They were stirring up a dangerous unrest among the native peoples beyond the borders. They were restless, aggressive, and inspired by hostility to the British power. And now, by the conquest of Natal, they had taken up a position on the sea-coast, where they might be doubly dangerous. What was to be done with them? In 1841 the Natal Boers began to attack the Kaffir tribes who lay between them and the old colony. This threatened to drive the Kaffirs into the colony. Thereupon Government reluctantly resolved to annex Natal (1842). The Boers at first showed fight; but resistance was useless, and most of them retired over the Drakensberg, back into the Orange Free State. Natal, now a British colony, was once more left empty. It was filled up rapidly by native refugees, who flocked to take advantage of British protection against the Zulus; and it was not until the last years of our period, between 1848 and 1851, that a few thousands of British immigrants were brought into the colony, which was to become the most British part of South Africa.

Britain had thus been driven into the annexation of new territory. But her rulers were eager to avoid further responsibilities of this kind. During the next decade their attitude towards the Boers and the natives wavered in a way that reflected their bewilderment. First, on the advice of the chief missionary leader, Dr. Philip of Cape Town, they resolved upon the creation of a ring of protected native states under missionary guidance, which should secure the natives against oppression, and form a barrier between the colony and the restless Boers. Four such States were set up between the Kalahari Desert and Natal: Griqualand West, under the chief Waterboer, head of a tribe of Dutch-Hottentot half-castes; the Eastern Griquas, in the southern part of what is now the Orange Free State; Basutoland, farther east; and Pondoland on the coast (1843).<sup>1</sup> But this well-meant arrangement broke down almost immediately: the native tribes were quite incapable of orderly and peaceful

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (*d*), 6th Edition Plate 89 (*a*).

government. Quarrels broke out between the Eastern Griquas and the white settlers in the country allotted to them, and in 1845 a British Commissioner had to be sent to Bloemfontein to maintain the peace. Next year, 1846, a new Kaffir invasion, the worst of the series, showed that the policy of non-intervention in native affairs was a complete failure.

Accordingly a return was made to the policy of D'Urban, the reversal of which had led to such far-reaching results ; and Sir Harry Smith, who had been D'Urban's right hand man, was sent to clear up the mess. He annexed British Kaffraria (1847), thus returning to D'Urban's methods ; and the readiness with which the Kaffirs settled down under British rule showed that annexation was the only key to peace. Smith also revised the treaty arrangements with the Basutos ; and as the only mode of preventing conflict between white settlers and natives, in 1848 he annexed the territory between the Orange and the Vaal, under the title of the Orange River Sovereignty. Some of the Boers offered resistance ; they were defeated at Boomplaat, and the irreconcilables withdrew into the Transvaal. But the majority of the Boer farmers in this region willingly accepted British government, glad to have order maintained, now that the disastrous native policy of Lord Glenelg had been abandoned. For six years a British agent at Bloemfontein ruled over an apparently contented population, while the more restless Boers preserved their chaotic independence in the Transvaal, broken into several mutually jealous States.

But this was not the end of vacillation. The home Government had very reluctantly assented to the latest annexations. It wanted no further responsibilities ; and held the view that the Boers had a moral right to independence if they desired it. In 1852, by the Sand River Convention, the complete independence of the Transvaal was formally recognised. Two years later, by the Bloemfontein Convention (1854), the Orange River Sovereignty was abandoned, and became the Orange Free State. Independence was, in truth, almost forced upon the Orange Boers, many of whom protested against the withdrawal of British protection.

Thus ended twenty years of confusion and vacillation, which had produced results of momentous importance to the future of South Africa. The single colony of 1830 had expanded into two colonies, two independent republics, and several protected native States. A racial cleavage and

memories of bitterness separated the republics from the two colonies ; and both republics were in a state of anarchy. This was the outcome of a generous and well-meaning policy, guided too much by sentimentalism, and too little by exact knowledge of facts. But very manifestly South Africa could not remain permanently in the condition in which it had been left by the agreements of 1852 and 1854. The British view as to native rights had been a good deal modified by events. But even in its modified form, it had not been accepted by the Boers ; and after a placid interval, fresh difficulties were to break out upon this fundamental issue.

§ 4. *Canada : The Rebellion of 1837 : the Durham Report : Responsible Government.*

While South Africa presented in its most difficult form the problem of adjusting the relations between white and coloured races, it was in Canada that the problem of colonial government was first and most clearly raised. Canada is the classic land of colonial self-government : it was on her soil that the principles were established which determined the lines of later development in all the self-governing dominions.

In 1830 all the Canadian colonies—Upper and Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland—possessed the traditional and characteristic institutions of British colonies, like those which had existed in all the American colonies before the Revolution : they all had representative assemblies with control of legislation and taxation, alongside of Governors sent out from Britain, and executive councils nominated by the Governors. And, as in the American colonies before the Revolution, there was growing friction between the assemblies on the one hand and the executives on the other. The assemblies were beginning to resent the limitations on their power. Being denied responsibility, they were acting irresponsibly, and using their control over laws and taxes to make government very difficult. Indeed, in two respects the situation was worse than it had been in the American colonies ; for on the one hand the Governors were subject to a far more detailed control by the Colonial Office than the eighteenth century had known ; and on the other hand they were largely in the hands of small and almost hereditary cliques in the several colonies, who monopolised effective power, and sometimes corruptly misused it.

The friction was least in the Maritime Provinces, though in Nova Scotia there was an opposition made bitter by a sense of its own impotence. In Upper Canada (Ontario) there was strong hostility to the ruling clique, known as the Family Compact ; and the nearness of the United States, together with the immigration of a good many Americans, had produced a movement for annexation. But it was in French Canada (Quebec) that the friction was most serious, for here it had taken on a nationalist complexion. The Executive Council was entirely British, the Assembly overwhelmingly French. Government had almost reached a deadlock, for the Assembly refused to pass even necessary laws when they were asked for by the Executive. Nationalist feeling had reached a dangerous pitch of intensity, stimulated by the fear that the growing British immigration would swamp the French nationality of Quebec. No French jury could be trusted to do justice in a case in which an Englishman was involved ; and social relationship between the two peoples was practically non-existent. There was a demand that Quebec should be kept purely French, a willingness to repudiate the authority of the British Crown, and to strike for complete independence. The chief spokesman of this movement was Louis Papineau, a florid orator who, ten years earlier, had spoken loud panegyrics on the blessings of British rule. He was supported by the lawyers who filled the Assembly, and who were the intellectual leaders of the unlettered *habitants* of the villages in which they practised. This racial conflict was not only politically mischievous, it was economically ruinous. Canada was stagnant and unprogressive, presenting a poignant contrast to the abounding energy of the United States ; and a large proportion of the emigrants who arrived from Britain made haste to cross the border, and became American citizens.

In 1836 the deadlock in Lower Canada was so serious that a commission of inquiry was sent out. It reported, in effect, that nothing could be done ; and on this Lord John Russell announced that, if necessary funds were refused by the Assembly (as had been done), its action would have to be overriden. This produced intense excitement in both Upper and Lower Canada ; and in both colonies abortive rebellions broke out (1837). The rising in Quebec, under Papineau, was the more serious. But the influence of the Roman Catholic bishops prevented it from becoming general, and it was easily crushed by Sir John Colborne. In Upper Canada the Scottish leader of the opposition, W. L. Mac-

kenzie, tried to raise a revolt, and for a moment threatened Toronto. But the sentiment of the colony was strongly loyalist, and the rising came to nothing. A later attack, made from the United States by a band of adventurers whom Mackenzie had collected in Buffalo (1838), was equally unavailing.

But merely to crush the risings was not enough ; and the reprisals in which the ascendancy parties in both provinces indulged were highly dangerous. The British Government had the good sense to see this. They sent out Lord Durham as Governor and High Commissioner with large powers, to inquire into the whole situation in all the Canadian colonies. It was an admirable choice. Durham was a high-spirited man, and had made enemies. But he was the one British statesman of the first rank who had given serious thought to colonial problems ; and he believed in freedom as the secret of political harmony. He took out with him Wakefield and Charles Buller. The colonial reformers were to have their chance.

Durham arrived in Canada in May 1838. He had to deal with two problems : the immediate difficulties created by the rebellion, and the future government of Canada. He found the gaols full of prisoners who could not be tried, because no jury would convict them ; while Papineau and other leaders had fled to the United States. Durham issued an ordinance condemning the fugitives to death if they should return, transported eight others to the Bermudas (over which he had no jurisdiction), and released the rest. His somewhat high-handed action laid him open to attack ; his ordinances were disallowed by the home Government ; and on November 1 he resigned, having held office for less than six months. His career was ended ; and he died in 1840, apparently a failure.

But during these brief six months he and his colleagues had been strenuously at work, investigating the conditions and problems of all the Canadian colonies. The result was the great *Report on Canada*, which he presented on his return to England in February 1839. If ever a piece of writing had the quality of an act of statesmanship, the *Report on Canada* deserves this description. For it placed the problems of colonial government in a new light. No one who read it could ever again think of them in the old narrow way. It defined the principles upon which the modern Commonwealth was to be reconstructed.

The greater part of this classic of colonial policy was



devoted to an incisive and unflinching examination of the situation in Canada, in which no one was spared, French or British, governments or oppositions ; and the root cause of every evil was traced to a vicious system, which failed to bring home to all citizens their responsibility for the common welfare. French and English must learn that Fate had made them partners, and cease to fight against one another. For that purpose Durham recommended that Upper and Lower Canada should be united ; he hoped that this would lead to the merging of the two races. He looked forward also to the ultimate unification of all the North American colonies, and therefore urged that it should be made easy for the Maritime Colonies to unite with Canada proper. He advocated the construction of railways and canals as a means of bringing them together. But the main burden of his message was that responsibility must be thrust upon the peoples, by giving supreme power to their representatives and ensuring that the executive government should be responsible to the legislatures. He made light of the argument that this would endanger the unity of the empire : nothing would be more dangerous to the unity of the empire than that it should seem to be identified with defiance of the public will. Moreover, he held that it would be easy to distinguish between questions of local concern and questions of imperial concern ; and under the latter head he enumerated foreign policy, defence, the regulation of trade, and the control of public lands. In regard to public lands he fully shared Wakefield's view that the wise direction of emigration would only be possible if all public lands within the empire were centrally controlled ; in regard to trade he anticipated the attempt which was later made to establish a system of Free Trade within the empire. On these points the later development of the Commonwealth has moved away from Durham's position. But his main contention—that it is only by making each community directly responsible for its own welfare that social and political health can be attained—became the foundation-principle of a reconstructed British Commonwealth.

One of Durham's recommendations was immediately carried out. In 1840 an Act was passed through the British Parliament uniting Upper and Lower Canada under a two-chamber legislature, a Legislative Council whose members sat for life, and a House of Assembly with an equal number of members from each province. But the greater step of making the executive responsible to the legislature was not

yet taken. Britain was not ready for it; the Duke of Wellington, whose party came into power in 1841, declared that 'local responsible government and the sovereignty of Great Britain are completely incompatible.' Probably Canada also was not yet ready for it, for racial hostility was still keen, and governments and oppositions might have been divided on racial lines. The first three Governors under the Act, Sydenham (1839-41), Bagot (1841-43), and Metcalfe (1843-46), acted as their own Prime Ministers. They were supported by a Government party, and opposed by an organised opposition which happily included both Englishmen and Frenchmen, and was led by two capable men, Baldwin and Lafontaine, who worked amicably together. The racial cleavage was beginning to heal; and the party organisation which could make parliamentary government possible was taking shape on non-racial lines.

In 1846 a new Liberal Government came into power in Britain; and its Colonial Secretary, Lord Grey, having frankly adopted the principle of responsible government, proceeded to put it into operation. His first despatch instructed the Governor of Nova Scotia to choose his ministries in accordance with the majority in the elected house, and to stand outside party, taking, like the Queen in Britain, no personal responsibility for the acts of his ministry. For the governorship of United Canada, Grey selected Lord Elgin, a son-in-law of Durham, and a convinced believer in his doctrines; and it was under Elgin—not by enactment, but, in the British way, by mere custom—that the usage of responsible government became fully established. In 1849 the new system was put to a dramatic test. The ministry proposed to pay compensation to those who had suffered during the rebellion of 1837. There was a furious outcry from the 'Loyalists,' who demanded that the Governor should veto the bill. Elgin firmly refused, even when the Parliament House was burned down, and he himself was pelted with stones and rotten eggs. He stuck to the fundamental principle that the ministry must be responsible. They might make mistakes; but it is only by letting men make mistakes and accept the consequences that they will be enabled to learn the responsibility of liberty. At home Elgin was vehemently criticised: Carlyle pilloried him as a cowardly and feeble ruler. But his action was a piece of courageous statesmanship, which crowned the work of Durham, and made responsible government a reality.

During the years when this momentous departure in

colonial government was being made, two long-vexed boundary disputes with the United States were settled, not without difficulty. They were settled by Britain, and Canadians have sometimes complained that their interests were sacrificed; but there does not seem to be any justification for the complaint. The first question was that of the Maine boundary, which had been a subject of controversy since 1783. In 1831 the United States were persuaded to refer the matter to arbitration, but they refused to accept the award when they found that it did not yield their claims. In 1838-9 frontier disputes nearly brought on a war; but at last, in 1842, a compromise was reached, in the Ashburton Treaty, whereby both sides sacrificed their extreme claims. The result was violently criticised both in Canada and in Maine. The second question was that of Oregon. In 1818, after long negotiations, it had been agreed that the boundary should run along the 49th parallel of latitude from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains. But beyond the Rocky Mountains, in the region which now includes British Columbia, Oregon and Washington, both Englishmen and Americans had been active, and no boundary had been fixed. America claimed the whole Pacific coast, and threatened war (1839-41) unless her claims were conceded in full; she twice refused to consent to arbitration. In 1846, however, when America was on the verge of war with Mexico, the Oregon Treaty was concluded, on the rational lines of continuing the 49th parallel as the boundary as far as the Pacific, with a southward dip to include on the British side the whole island of Vancouver. The result of these treaties was to fix the longest undefended and indefensible frontier which divides any two countries in the world; yet on the two sides of this imaginary line two great free communities have been able to live for three-quarters of a century in unbroken peace. Even if the Canadian claims had been irrefutable, some sacrifice would have been worth while for so remarkable a result.

The new colonial policy had achieved a genuine triumph in Canada within twenty years. It had established the fullest measure of self-government ever enjoyed by any colony in history. It had restored harmony and made co-operation possible between the two partner-races, recently in open conflict. It had opened an era of glowing prosperity, after an era of depression. These were great achievements. They set a model for the future development of the British Commonwealth.

§ 5. *Australia : Land Problems, Immigrants and Convicts.*

The problems of Australia were widely different from those of South Africa or of Canada. Australia had no racial difficulties. All her immigrants were British. Her aborigines were few and of a degraded type ; they avoided the regions occupied by the white man ; and they never gave any serious trouble. It was the difficulty of getting rid of the convicts, and the difficulty of persuading free settlers to cross 12,000 miles of ocean, that alone stood in the way of Australia's growth. She is the only great country in the world that has never been disturbed by war or violent revolution.

In 1830 the Australian continent included three colonies, two of which, New South Wales and Tasmania, were still predominantly convict settlements. Convicts formed 40 per cent. of the population of New South Wales in 1833, and most of the remainder consisted of freed convicts and their children ; in Tasmania the proportion of convicts was still higher. Western Australia, the only free colony, had just been established, but it was in a very precarious condition, and seemed likely to die of inanition. Free emigrants were still very few : between 1821 and 1827 they had averaged only 600 per annum, and even the assisted emigration of 1828-9 had only brought the average up to 1500. The cost of the journey was so great, and the reputation of a convict settlement so deterrent, that it was scarcely to be hoped that any large stream of emigration would turn towards Australia when Canada and the United States lay so much nearer at hand. Australia could do nothing to help herself ; the possibility of healthy growth depended wholly upon what the mother-country might do.

Between 1830 and 1855 these conditions were strikingly transformed. The struggling penal settlements were turned into thriving colonies of free men, endowed with a high degree of self-government. At the same time there was great activity in exploration,<sup>1</sup> and the main features of the Australian continent were disclosed by a gallant band of discoverers, Sturt, Mitchell, Eyre, Leichhardt and others, who traced the course of the Murray and its tributaries, revealed the beauty and fertility of Victoria, explored the interior of Queensland and the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and indicated the character of the huge barren region which occupies the centre of the continent.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 65 (b), 6th Edition Plate 87 (a), where the main routes are shown.

But the main achievement of the period was the attraction of large numbers of immigrants of a good type ; upon that everything depended. And the success which was attained was very largely due to the group of colonial reformers of whom Wakefield was the centre. In 1831 the Colonial Office adopted Wakefield's main idea, prohibited free grants of land, and ordered that land must be sold at a minimum price of 5s. per acre, and that the proceeds must be devoted to assisting emigrants : in 1842 the price was raised to £1 per acre, in order to discourage the purchase of holdings too large to be worked by the purchaser. This still left it open to 'squatters' to occupy waste lands for sheep-breeding at a small quit-rent ; and it long remained a vexed question how far the rights of the 'squatters' extended, and whether they should be allowed to prevent intensive settlement. The funds derived from the sale of lands brought a good many immigrants ; and the British Government also expended considerable annual sums in assisting emigration. The immigrants, however, were not very eager to settle among convicts, and hence one of the results of the growing stream of immigration was the foundation of two new colonies, free from the convict taint—in 1835 Victoria (which was under New South Wales until 1852), and in 1836 South Australia, which was from the first a distinct settlement.

Victoria was at first peopled from New South Wales and Tasmania, largely by men who wanted to get away from the convicts ; but after 1838 an inrush of British immigrants began, helped from the funds created by sales of land ; and under the vigorous if autocratic rule of Sir George Gipps the colony rapidly took root and throve.

South Australia was started as an experiment in scientific colonisation on Wakefield's lines, by a company which Wakefield organised in 1830. According to Wakefield's plan, the company was to be free from Colonial Office meddling ; it was to sell its land at good prices, and use the money to bring out emigrants ; no convicts were to be admitted ; and as soon as the settlers numbered 10,000 they were to receive the fullest self-governing powers on democratic lines. Unfortunately the Colonial Office would not give up its control, and was frightened by Wakefield's democratic schemes. After long delays, some of Wakefield's chief provisions were omitted. Authority was divided between a body of Commissioners in London and a Governor responsible to the Colonial Office ; and Wakefield was not

even appointed a Commissioner. It is not surprising that the colony did not fulfil Wakefield's hopes. The first two Governors squandered money recklessly; and solvency was only restored by the firm and clear-headed administration of George Grey (1841-5), who now entered upon his great career as a colonial statesman. In 1842 the Commissioners were swept away, and the ordinary form of Crown Colony government was set up under the control of the Colonial Office. Wakefield's critics asserted that his theories had been shown to be fallacious. But in truth they had not been fairly tested; and even so, they had been the means of bringing out 16,000 settlers in a very short time, and planting them prosperously on the land.

The result of all this activity was that the number of free immigrants soon swamped the convict element of the Australian population. The 1500 immigrants of 1830 rose to 14,000 in 1838, and to 32,000 in 1841. But the more the free population grew, the more obvious it became that the system of transporting convicts must be brought to an end. This was all the more necessary because the character of the convicts was changing. In the old days, when a man might be transported for stealing five shillings' worth of cloth, many of the convicts had been anything but irredeemable criminals. But now that Peel and Russell had reformed the English penal code, only real criminals came out. The new immigrants demanded the abolition of the system; and the colonial reformers at home took up the cause with enthusiasm. In 1837 a Parliamentary Committee presided over by Sir William Molesworth, pronounced strongly against the system. In 1840 it was abolished for New South Wales, and in 1853 for Tasmania. The change brought about by immigration on the one hand, and by the abolition of transportation on the other, may be indicated by two figures. In 1833 the population of New South Wales was 60,000, of whom 40 per cent. were convicts: in 1850 the population was 265,000, and less than 1 per cent. were convicts.

So long as Australia was primarily a convict settlement, she obviously could not enjoy self-government. But the changes we have described enabled her to enter upon her natural inheritance as a British community. In 1842 the nominated Legislative Council which had existed in New South Wales since 1824 was transformed into a body two-thirds of whose members were elected on a democratic suffrage. But Australia was developing so rapidly that the colonists—with the example of Canada before their eyes—

demanded responsible self-government. And they were met with extraordinary readiness by the Government of Lord John Russell, and by Lord Grey as Colonial Secretary. Grey conceived the project (1847) of creating a federal system for the Australian group of colonies. If his ideas had been carried out, Australia would in this regard have taken the lead of all the British dominions. But Grey was ahead of his time, and some features of his scheme were much disliked by the colonists. In 1850, however, Lord John Russell introduced into the British Parliament a measure of so striking a character that it may be said to mark, even more fully than the Durham Report, the triumph of the ideal of colonial self-government. The Act separated Victoria from New South Wales, and provided for the future separation of Queensland. But its main provision was of a kind to which no parallel can be found in the relations between a supreme Government and a dependent community created and nurtured by itself. It actually empowered each colonial council to draft a constitution for itself, subject to the approval of the Privy Council; and it also empowered the colonial legislatures to levy what duties they saw fit, upon British as well as foreign goods. This was in effect a proclamation that the Australian colonies had come of age, and must henceforth enjoy complete and responsible control of their own destinies.

Under the terms of this Act New South Wales, Tasmania, Victoria, and South Australia created their own democratic systems, which were confirmed and endorsed by Acts of the British Parliament in 1855. They modelled their systems closely upon that of the mother-country; and, in moving the adoption of the bill to confirm them, Russell expressed the true spirit of the new colonial policy when he pointed out that the colonists' 'avowed desire to assimilate their institutions to those of the mother-country' arose from 'a deliberate attachment to the ancient laws of the community from which their own was sprung.' He prophesied that they would combine with 'their independent course of progress and prosperity . . . the jealous maintenance of ties thus cemented at once by feeling and principle.' Russell prophesied well. The Australian group of colonies entered upon their career as free self-governing States, not less but more loyal members of the British Commonwealth because its heritage of political liberty had been so unstintingly shared with them.

§ 6. *New Zealand : Maoris, Missionaries, and Scientific Colonisers.*

The youngest of the great British dominions, New Zealand owes her organisation as a colony to this period of systematic colonisation. Her development was more rapid than that of any other colony, for within a dozen years of the first settlement on her shores she was equipped with the full system of responsible government. Into these few years was crowded a great deal of instructive experience; for New Zealand was the only colony in which the two chief constructive forces of the period, the missionaries and the scientific colonisers, met and clashed.

Captain Cook had annexed the islands when he rediscovered them in 1769; but nothing had been done to enforce the claim thus created, and for more than a generation the native inhabitants had been left undisturbed. These were the Maoris, of the handsome and charming Polynesian stock, the most attractive and intelligent of the primitive peoples. There were about 100,000 of them in the North Island when British settlement began, but only a few hundred in the South Island, which was almost an empty land. Virile, chivalrous and romantic, the numerous Maori tribes spent their time with gusto in incessant war; eager to taste all new experiences, they gave a ready and fearless welcome to the first white visitors. From the end of the eighteenth century there was a growing drift to the islands of traders and sealers, escaped convicts and runaway sailors, some of whom adopted the Maori way of life, and were known as *pahekas*. These vagrom settlers, who were not the most reputable representatives of Western civilisation, numbered about 1000 in 1830.

Meanwhile a better type of Englishmen had begun to appear. In 1814, Samuel Marsden, a trading chaplain from Sydney, led the way in missionary enterprise; and soon there were a good many representatives of the Church Missionary Society, and later some Wesleyans. The missionaries established a remarkable influence over the Maoris. Though they were unable to wean most of the tribes from their passion for war, or even from their abominable habit of eating their defeated foes, they made many converts, opened numerous schools, and won the confidence of most of the chiefs. Some of the missionaries were not above misusing their position to obtain immense grants of land. But they were beyond question a real civilising power.



They dreamed of building up in New Zealand a sort of theocracy ; they reasonably distrusted the influence of the class of white settlers who had hitherto appeared in the islands ; and they desired to keep the Maoris as free as possible from contact with white men. In 1833 they succeeded in obtaining for this purpose the appointment of a British Resident, to keep traders and other interlopers in order. But this did not imply annexation, and the Resident had no real power.

It was impossible, however, that European influence should be kept at arm's-length from these beautiful and fertile lands : the only question was whether this influence was to be brought under effective organisation and control, or left to operate irregularly. During the 'twenties land-speculators and other adventurers were beginning to get a foothold. During the 'thirties, and especially in 1838, there were many signs that the French (who in that year occupied Tahiti, where British missionaries had long been at work) were contemplating intervention in New Zealand. Meanwhile, in Britain, Wakefield and his group were urging the importance of annexing and colonising the country. It was 'the fittest country in the world for colonisation,' Wakefield told a parliamentary committee in 1836 ; and he pointed out that it was already being settled in an unregulated way which could only lead to injustice to the Maoris. Wakefield and Durham founded a New Zealand Association, and strove to obtain the consent of the Colonial Office for a scheme of colonisation which Wakefield drafted. But the Church Missionary Society offered strenuous opposition ; and the Colonial Secretary was an officer of the Society.

At length, in 1839, the Wakefield group resolved to take action themselves, since Government would do nothing ; and they started a Company with Durham as chairman, and a capital of £1,000,000. Wakefield's brother and son were sent out to buy land and make other arrangements, in preparation for a large party of emigrants who were to follow. But Colonel Wakefield was hampered by the persistent opposition of the missionaries ; he did not understand the complexities of Maori land-tenure ; and although his instructions were to take the utmost pains to avoid unfairness, his bargains were in some cases open to question. When the first party of immigrants, an admirably selected body of 1300, reached their destination, they found themselves embroiled in all sorts of difficulties.

The action of Wakefield and his Company forced the hands

of Government; and in January 1840 Captain Hobson was sent from Sydney to effect the annexation of New Zealand in the name of the British Crown, and to act as the first Lieutenant-Governor, under the Governor of New South Wales. With the aid of the missionaries, Hobson held a congress of Maori chiefs, and concluded the Treaty of Waitangi, whereby the chiefs yielded all rights of sovereignty to Her Majesty, and in return were guaranteed full possession of all their lands, and the rights of British subjects. The aim of this treaty was to do justice to the Maoris; but it went needlessly far in recognising 100,000 Maoris as the owners of 65,000,000 acres of land, nine-tenths of which were unoccupied.

With the Treaty of Waitangi began a decade of friction and confusion. On the one hand were the Company and its emigrants, whose object was colonisation, and who were a little apt to ride roughshod over the complicated Maori rules of land-tenure. On the other hand were the Maoris, who enjoyed quarrelling for its own sake, and the missionaries, whose object was to prevent colonisation, and who were less than fair to the settlers. In these circumstances the process of settlement was harassed and difficult. The Company established settlements at Wellington and Taranaki in the North Island, and at Nelson in the South Island, while a Government settlement was made at Auckland.<sup>1</sup> But there was incessant friction with the Maoris; and after many minor troubles, in 1848 a rebellion blazed out in the North Island, in which the Maoris fought with remarkable gallantry. This continual unrest did not encourage immigration; even before the rising of 1848, Wakefield's Company was at the end of its resources, and the outlook seemed desperate.

Happily a man with a genius for such problems was appointed Governor in 1845. Sir George Grey, having saved the situation in South Australia, came to save it in New Zealand. His governorship, which extended over eight years, planted the new colony fairly on the road to prosperity. He won the hearts of the Maoris by studying their customs, and speaking to them in their own tongue; but he was firm with them, and insisted that they must live at peace with their neighbours. With the land question, the root of most of the trouble, he dealt skilfully by making huge purchases from the Maori chiefs, mainly in unoccupied regions, and transferring them to the Company for settlement. Far indeed from sharing the missionaries' desire to

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 65 (c), 6th Edition Plate 87 (b).

keep the Maoris aloof from western civilisation, he was as enthusiastic for British settlement as Wakefield himself. By 1850 the friction with the Maoris was at an end: Maori chiefs were making roads at their own expense, and petitioning the Queen to appoint Grey Governor for life. The Company also had learnt to avoid its early blunders. It had turned its attention to the empty lands of the South Island, and had enlisted the co-operation of the Churches. Under the auspices of the Free Church of Scotland a Scottish colony was founded in the hilly province of Otago, which is more like Scotland than most other regions of the world; while the English Society for the Propagation of the Gospel brought out admirable bodies of English settlers to the fertile and English-seeming province of Canterbury.

Having achieved this work, which fulfilled the dream of Wakefield in a higher degree than any of his other schemes, the New Zealand Company resigned its charter (1852). It had made mistakes; but it had carried out the process of settlement so well that, only twelve years after the landing of the first shipload of emigrants, the new colony was ready to stand on its own feet. It already included over 30,000 settlers. But they were scattered in six distinct settlements, at Auckland, Taranaki and Wellington in the North Island, and at Nelson, Canterbury and Otago in the South Island. This fact was recognised in a constitution which was drafted by Earl Grey, and revised by Sir George Grey (1852). Each of the six provinces was given a Provincial Council, while a General Assembly was set up to deal with common affairs, to administer Crown lands, and to levy customs duties; but as a means of protecting the Maoris, the Crown still reserved the sole right of buying lands from native owners, and the power to uphold native institutions in the Maori districts. This was a reasonable settlement, appropriate to the stage of development which New Zealand had attained. It was a fair adjustment of the two principles upon which the new colonial system was founded—the protection of native rights, and the conferment of self-governing powers upon organised bodies of civilised settlers. Within a short compass, the first dozen years of the history of New Zealand had, in truth, illustrated all the new ideas which were reshaping the British Commonwealth.

#### § 7. *The Significance of the New Colonial Policy.*

By 1852 the main features of the new colonial system had emerged from the various and many-sided activities which

had filled the two decades of reconstruction ; and during the Russell ministry, which occupied the last years of this period, Lord Grey, at the Colonial Office, gave form and body to the new order. It was Grey whose instructions made responsible government a reality in Canada ; who ended for a time the turmoil of South Africa by recognising the independence of the two Dutch republics ; who tried to federate Australia and, when that failed, empowered the Australian colonies to define their own constitutions ; and who endowed the infant settlements of New Zealand with the institutions of self-government. The character of the modern Commonwealth was fixed. It was to be a fellowship of self-governing peoples, and its unity was to be voluntary rather than compulsory ; but at the same time it was to be the means of protecting backward and subject peoples in the exercise of their rights. In the case of the white settlements the ideal of partnership, in the case of backward peoples the ideal of trusteeship, had replaced the older ideal of mere dominion.

The establishment of these ideas implied nothing less than a revolution in the conceptions underlying imperial power. The credit of this revolution does not belong to any one man. It must be shared by a multitude of men and women who seldom saw eye to eye, and often reviled one another : by missionaries, by philanthropists, by theoretical economists, by practical enthusiasts such as Wakefield, by administrators such as Sir James Stephen, by statesmen such as Durham and the two Greys and Russell. But among them they had achieved a complete recast of the principles upon which the relations of the British Commonwealth had hitherto been determined ; they had given an altogether new content and significance to the term Empire.

[Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* ; Todd, *Parliamentary Government in the British Colonies* ; Egerton, *Short History of British Colonial Policy* ; Wakefield, *Art of Colonisation* ; Garnett, *Life of E. G. Wakefield* ; Buller, *Responsible Government* ; Egerton, *Selected Speeches of Sir W. Molesworth* ; Cornwall Lewis, *Government of Dependencies* ; Durham, *Report on Canada* ; Reid, *Life of Durham* ; Fawcett, *Life of Molesworth* ; Grey (3rd Earl), *Colonial Policy of Lord J. Russell's Administration* ; Lucas, *Historical Geography of the West Indies* ; *Historical Geography of South Africa* ; Theal, *History of South Africa* ; Cory, *History of South Africa* ; Egerton and Grant, *Constitutional History of Canada* ; Kingsford, *History of Canada* ; Rogers, *Historical Geography of Australasia* ; Jenks, *The Australasian Colonies* ; Reeves, *Long White Cloud* ; Henderson, *Life of Sir G. Grey*.]

## CHAPTER XI

### RECONSTRUCTION AND EXPANSION IN INDIA: AND THE FIRST CONFLICT WITH CHINA

(A.D. 1830-1850)

#### § 1. *The Act of 1833 and the New Policy in India.*

IN India, as in the English-speaking colonies, the era of liberal reconstruction brought great changes in outlook and policy. Ever since the conquests of Wellesley had made Britain the paramount Power in India, an enlarged sense of responsibility for the welfare of the Indian peoples had been growing among Anglo-Indian administrators. But in Britain also ideas about India were changing. It was impossible, in the temper of the time, that the East India Company should any longer be regarded primarily as a means of bringing wealth and trade to the home country. The new spirit found expression in the India Act of 1833, which opened the second era of British Indian history. The first era had been that of conquest; the second was to be that of reorganisation and penetration.

By a happy chance, the Charter of the East India Company fell to be renewed in 1833; and in accordance with custom a strong parliamentary committee was set up to review the working of the Company's system. Its searching and voluminous report laid down new principles of legislation, and formed the basis of the momentous Act of 1833. There was some talk of suppressing the Company, and transferring its political authority to the Crown. This course was not adopted, because it was felt that the Board of Directors, possessing special knowledge and being free from the considerations of party interest which are apt to have undue weight in Parliament, formed a valuable factor in the system. But the Committee strongly urged that if the Company was to continue to exercise political powers, it must cease to be a profit-making organisation, and must make the welfare of its subjects, not the dividends of its shareholders, its primary concern. 'It is recognised as an

indisputable principle,' asserted the Committee in a striking passage, 'that the interests of the native subjects are to be consulted in preference to those of Europeans whenever the two come in conflict.' The assertion of this principle—to which it would be hard to find a parallel in the records of the dominion of one people over another—raised the whole problem of Indian government to a different plane. The Committee was equally emphatic in the assertion that India must be governed in accordance with Indian ideas. They urged that 'the principles of British law could never be made the basis of an Indian code'; and they condemned the practice of excluding Indians from responsible office, which had been followed since the time of Cornwallis.

The India Act of 1833 was inspired by these ideas. It forbade the Company to engage in trade at all, and thus brought to an end the association of government with profit-making. It recognised the unity of the Indian Empire by giving to the Governor-General the title of 'Governor-General of India,' in place of the absurd traditional title of 'Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal'; it deprived the minor Presidencies of any shadow of independence; and it empowered the Governor-General, with his Council of four members, to make laws for the whole of British India, subject only to the supreme overriding power of the Imperial Parliament. For the first time a single central Government was to be the source of all authority throughout British India. The Act also provided for a systematic codification of Indian law, which was to pay due regard 'to the rights, feelings and peculiar usages of the people'; and it added for this purpose a new Legal Member to the Governor-General's Council. For the first time in her long history India was to be endowed with a single uniform system of law, clearly defined and not capable of being arbitrarily modified. Again, the principle was laid down that no Indian might 'by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent or colour, be disabled from holding any place, office, or employment under the Company.' Finally, free access to all parts of India was granted to all Europeans, who had hitherto only been admitted under special license. The influence of the West was to be allowed to play freely upon India; and in particular an open field was offered to the missionaries and their schools of Western learning, hitherto regarded with distrust as disturbing factors. But, lest missionaries or traders should abuse the prestige of the ruling race, the Governor-General was required to draft

regulations for the protection of Indians 'from insults and outrages in their persons, religions or opinions.'

The first Governor-General under the Act was Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, who had been in office since 1828; and it is with his name that the era of reform which now began is associated. The first Legal Member under the Act was Macaulay. It was under his direction that the task of drawing up the Indian Code was undertaken; but he built upon the foundations laid fifty years before by Hastings and Impey,<sup>1</sup> whom he was to defame. There were many reforms in the administrative system, and many offices were thrown open to Indians. A stricter supervision over the protected native States was also inaugurated; and two of them, Coorg and Mysore, were brought under direct British administration as the only cure for misgovernment. Coorg remains a British province; Mysore was restored in 1881 to the government of its hereditary Maharaja. But the most distinctive feature of Bentinck's administration was that he boldly attacked certain Indian usages which Western morality condemned, but with which no interference had hitherto been attempted, lest Indian religious sentiment should be outraged. The most important of these interferences (1829) was the prohibition of the practice of *sati*—the self-immolation of widows, as a religious duty, upon the funeral pyres of their husbands. With this may be linked the beginning of a systematic campaign against *thagi*, an organised conspiracy of murder and robbery carried on by men who professed to regard their crimes as sacrifices to the Goddess of Destruction, and whose operations were assisted by the superstitious terror of the population. It took twenty years to root out *thagi*.<sup>2</sup>

But these signs of the coming of a new spirit into British rule in India were of less importance than the rapid development of Western education, which was the outstanding feature of the years following 1833. Hitherto Government had hesitated to give encouragement or support to the modest schools of Western learning which had come into being since Wellesley's time. The small funds which it assigned to educational purposes were devoted to the traditional learning of India, conveyed by Hindu *pandits* and Moslem *maulvis* through the classical tongues of Sanscrit, Arabic and Persian. But there had long been a sharp division of opinion on this subject, among both Englishmen

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. vii. chap. vi. p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Read Meadows Taylor's *Adventures of a Thug*.

and Indians; and a strong minority in the Government Committee of Public Instruction advocated the diffusion of • Western learning, with English as the medium of instruction. Scarcely anybody urged the use of the vernaculars for advanced education, partly because the vernaculars are so numerous—there are 147 recognised languages in India—but mainly because these tongues were not sufficiently developed to be used for such a purpose. In 1835 Macaulay was appointed chairman of the Committee of Public Instruction; and the downright and uncompromising arguments which he advanced in his famous Education Minute of that year ensured the victory of the Western school. From 1835 Government grants, which steadily increased in amount, were devoted to the provision or assistance of schools and colleges in which Western science was taught in the English language; while the educational activities of the missionaries were encouraged and aided.

During the following generation the influence of the new learning slowly permeated the leading members of the old ruling classes, especially among the Hindus. It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of this process for the history of India; we shall have to trace some of its consequences in later chapters.<sup>1</sup> It was to bring to an end the age-long intellectual isolation of India. It was to give to educated Indians of different provinces a common medium of communication: English has been to India what Latin was to mediæval Europe, the means of enabling men of varied races to feel common interests and to take common action. It was to introduce Indians to the literature which is beyond all others the literature of liberty, and to teach them the vocabulary of free politics, without which political thinking is impossible. None of the changes which British rule has brought to India has been more momentous than the introduction of English education.

### § 2. *The North-West Frontier and the Russian Menace.*

The work of reform, begun under Bentinck, was not interrupted under his successors. But under the three Governors-General who immediately succeeded Bentinck—Auckland (1836-42), Ellenborough (1842-44) and Hardinge (1844-48), the main interest in Indian history was transferred to the military sphere. A new period of conquest began, in the course of which the frontiers of British India were extended

<sup>1</sup> See below, Bk. x. chap. vi. p. 558; Bk. xi. chap. v. p. 666.



to their natural limits, in the great mountain-barriers of the North-West. This period of warfare was the direct outcome of affairs in Europe. It arose from the acute rivalry between Britain and Russia which produced, in the minds of British statesmen, and notably of Lord Palmerston, a nightmare dread of a Russian attack on India.

Since 1818 the frontier of the British *raj* had roughly corresponded with the line of the Sutlej and the Indus.<sup>1</sup> But beyond this far from defensible frontier lay three important independent Powers; the Sikhs in the Punjab, the Amirs of Sind in the lower Indus valley, and, behind both, the wild mountain tribes of Afghanistan, who controlled the gateways into India through which, for untold centuries, successive invaders had passed. These States formed a barrier against invasion from the landward side; and it was felt to be essential for the safety of India that friendly relations with them should be maintained.

The most formidable of these frontier Powers seemed to be Afghanistan. The Afghan kingdom had threatened invasion as recently as the time of Wellesley. But since then it had broken up. The heir of the old ruling house, Shah Shuja, was an exile in India; and Dost Mohammed, head of the family which had ousted him, could control little more than the city of Kabul and its neighbourhood. In the fertile territory of the Punjab, the land of the five rivers, a highly organised military power had been built up by the Sikhs, who were not a distinct people, but rather a religious sect, a sort of Puritan offshoot of Hinduism, whose votaries were confined to this part of India. Even in the Punjab they formed a small minority of the population. But a Sikh leader of remarkable ability, Ranjit Singh, had built up an empire which included the whole of the Punjab, had borrowed European officers to train his armies, and was able to carry on an equal conflict with the Afghans. Finally, isolated among the deserts of the lower Indus valley, were the Mohammedan Amirs of Sind. They threatened nobody; but their lands were crossed by the roads which led to the southern passes into Afghanistan; they could interrupt the river traffic of the Indus; and for these reasons they were important.

The British Government had anxiously cultivated friendly relations with the trans-Indus States ever since 1809, when, after the Treaty of Tilsit, the first alarm was raised of a Russian attack on India. In the 'thirties, when Palmerston

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

and the Tsar were competing for influence at Constantinople, Russia was steadily adding to her dominions in Central Asia,<sup>1</sup> and establishing her influence at the court of Persia. These events awakened the old fear of a Russian attack on India; and when it was learnt that Russian agents had obtained a friendly reception at Kabul, the suspicion and dread of Russia became keen. The Governor-General, Lord Auckland, who was a disciple of Palmerston, resolved that a friendly prince must be placed upon the throne of Afghanistan. For this purpose he fixed upon the futile old exile, Shah Shuja; he organised an army to escort him to Kabul; and he made treaties with the Sikhs and the Amirs of Sind to secure a free passage for these forces (1838). The expedition thus undertaken was not only imprudent in the highest degree, it was an act of needless aggression.

At first the expedition seemed to be wholly successful. Shah Shuja was placed upon the throne of Kabul under the protection of a British army and a British Resident. But the Afghans for the most part remained loyal to his fugitive rival, Dost Mohammed. These fierce warriors were not likely to accept a king imposed upon them by foreign bayonets. At first they stood sullenly aloof. Then they became increasingly hostile. The army in Kabul was isolated. Towards the end of 1841 the Resident found it necessary to negotiate with the rebel chiefs for permission to retreat. He was murdered; and the doomed army had to fight its way back, in the dead of winter, through the grim defiles of the Khyber region. In this dreadful ordeal they were disorganised and finally destroyed. This was the most complete and humiliating disaster that had ever befallen British arms in India.

A new Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough, was sent out to redeem the disgrace. He showed a good deal of courage and vigour. Kabul was reconquered, only to be promptly evacuated, as soon as the Afghans released their British captives; and Afghanistan was left to itself. Unfortunately Ellenborough was so much impressed by the necessity of restoring the damaged prestige of Britain that he was tempted to make blunders. The rhetorical tone of his proclamations offended British taste. He brought back from Ghazni the spurious Gates of Somnath with an absurd solemnity. Worst of all, he succumbed to the temptation of showing British strength by an attack upon Sind.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 63, 6th Edition Plates 82 and 83.

Sind is the only British acquisition in India of which it may fairly be said that it was not necessitated by circumstances, and that its conquest was therefore an act of pure aggression. It is true that the country was ill governed, and that the Amirs had not observed their promises in regard to the free navigation of the Indus. But these were not sufficient reasons for the high-handed treatment which they received from Sir Charles Napier, the Governor-General's representative. This treatment goaded them into an attack upon the Residency at Hyderabad, where Colonel Outram represented the British authority; and this gave the excuse which was desired. In the battle of Miani (1843) the Sindians were routed by Napier, and their country was annexed. But the episode left a bad taste; and the chivalrous Outram went home to plead the cause of the exiled Amirs, who had 'never contemplated opposing our power, and were only driven to do so from desperation.' His protests were vain; and, indeed, annexation brought nothing but good to the people of Sind. The whole story was admirably summed up by Napier himself as 'a very advantageous, useful and humane piece of rascality.'

Nor was this the end of the reactions which resulted from the ill-advised Afghan adventure. In the Mahratta State of Gwalior the Maharaja's army of 40,000 men got out of hand, and two battles had to be fought (1843) before order was restored. Meanwhile there was growing restlessness among the Sikhs in the Punjab. Since Ranjit Singh's death in 1839 the Sikh realm had been steadily sinking into anarchy. The Government was impotent. The great Sikh army was completely out of hand. It was the most formidable and the best organised army that any Indian Power had ever possessed. It numbered nearly 90,000 men, had been trained by skilful European officers, and was supported by well equipped and abundant artillery. Full of pride in its own fighting power, it had been taught by the Afghan disasters to think lightly of the British capacity for resistance. The danger of conflict was therefore very great.

The British Government was determined to avoid a clash with the Sikhs if it were possible. In 1844 the hot-headed Ellenborough was recalled; and his successor, Lord Hardinge, a distinguished veteran of the Peninsular War, went out with the fixed resolve that the Sikhs must be left to enjoy their independence, and that no interference in their

affairs must be attempted. It was necessary, of course, to maintain forces on the frontier as a protection against the danger of a Sikh attack; but Hardinge was so eager to avoid anything that might cause irritation that he reduced the frontier armies to a dangerous extent.

At the end of 1845 the Sikh army suddenly crossed the Sutlej, hoping to take the British unawares. They numbered some 60,000 brave and well-trained fighting men; and it was only after a series of the most desperate battles in the history of British India—Mudki, Ferozeshah, Aliwal and Sobraon—that they were driven back. (January, February, 1846.) After the final victory of Sobraon the Governor-General dictated peace in the Sikh capital of Lahore. It was a very moderate peace. The Sikhs were compelled to pay a small indemnity and to cede the beautiful land of Kashmir (one of Ranjit Singh's conquests), as well as certain strips of frontier territory. Sikh government was re-established under the young Maharaja Dhulip Singh; and a British Resident, Sir Henry Lawrence, was placed at Lahore to help the Government in establishing order and instituting a civilised system of administration.

But the Sikh chieftains resented their subordination to an English protectorate; and the Sikh army had not given up hope of reversing the decision of 1846. In 1848 the Diwan of the fortress of Multan revolted from the Lahore Government; and his initial success tempted the army to rise. Lord Hardinge had recently left India. His successor, Lord Dalhousie, recognised that a final war with the Sikhs was inevitable. This second war was almost as hard-fought as the first. At Chilianwala, in January 1849, a desperate indecisive battle showed that the fighting-power of the Sikhs was still very great; and a second great battle had to be fought at Gujrat before they admitted defeat. It was now manifestly of no avail to re-establish the protectorate system which Hardinge had set up; and Dalhousie rightly decided that outright annexation was the only practicable course. As we shall see in a later chapter,<sup>1</sup> he was to turn the Punjab into a model province; and from that day to this the land which had produced the valorous fighting men of Ferozeshah and Chilianwala has been the chief recruiting ground for the armies of British India.

A decade of almost uninterrupted warfare, from the expedition to Kabul to the annexation of the Punjab, had thus

<sup>1</sup> Bk. x. chap. vi. p. 545.

resulted in the annexation of the whole valley of the Indus, and had brought the Indian Empire to its natural frontier in the great barrier of mountains and deserts on the North-West. The process of unifying India by conquest was completed; the long process which had begun at Plassey had reached its culmination, and India, for the first time in all her troubled history, had become a single great Empire, within whose guardian seas and mountains unbroken peace reigned.

The rapid process of expansion did not cease, however, even with the attainment of the natural frontiers of India proper. Away in the east, on the other side of the Bay of Bengal, Dalhousie was in 1852 drawn into a second war with the Burmese Empire.

British traders, who had settled in Rangoon under the protection of the treaty of 1826,<sup>1</sup> made many complaints of the oppressions and the interruptions of trade to which they had to submit. A naval officer, sent with a frigate to demand redress and compensation, declared a blockade of the Burmese ports and was fired upon. Thereupon Dalhousie despatched an ultimatum, and when no answer was received, a perfectly organised expedition was sent to obtain redress by force. In a masterly eight-weeks' campaign, Rangoon and Prome were captured, and since the barbaric court of Ava refused to treat, Dalhousie proclaimed the annexation of the rich deltaic province of Pegu or Lower Burma to the Indian Empire. From the moment of annexation the new province enjoyed an abounding prosperity, and Rangoon rapidly became one of the great ports of Asia. The new conquest shut off the Burmese Empire from the sea. It linked up the coastal strips of Arakan and Tenasserim, conquered in 1826, and gave to the British power control over the whole eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. And (what was still more important) it brought the expanding British Commonwealth into more intimate contact with the yellow-skinned peoples of the Far East. With the greatest of these peoples, the Chinese, an independent series of events had already established a new relationship, which was to be so important in its consequences that it must not pass unnoticed.

### § 3 *The First Conflict with China.*

While the first serious impact of Western ideas was reaching the ancient civilisation of India, China also had to open

<sup>1</sup> Above p 348

her gates to the West. It fell to Britain to play the chief part in breaching the barriers by which the disdained barbarians of the outer world had hitherto been kept aloof from the Celestial Empire. And it was because the East India Company lost in 1833 the monopoly of British trade with China that open friction began.

For more than two centuries European traders had striven to open up trade with the ports of China, and especially with Canton, the great emporium of the South. They had only been able to do so under strict and humiliating restrictions, and had always found themselves faced by an impenetrable barrier of pride. The Chinese refused to deal with the European traders as equals. When embassies were sent to arrange terms of equal intercourse, they were required to submit to the degradation of the *kotow*, knocking their heads nine times on the ground in the presence of the Emperor, or even of his portrait, and even when they submitted, they got no further. Official China barely condescended to recognise the existence of the foreigner, and declined to allow him any regular privileges of trade, however much he might abase himself.

Nevertheless European trade persisted, mainly at Canton, where the mandarins winked at it because they made profit out of it. During the eighteenth century, and still more since the revolutionary war, a practical monopoly of this trade had fallen to the British East India Company. The main commodities dealt in were, on the Chinese side, tea, silk, and porcelain, and on the British side Indian stuffs, British manufactures, and Indian opium. The opium traffic was the most valuable, yielding to the East India Company an annual profit of about £1,000,000. But the Chinese Government had prohibited the importation of opium in 1796, and the trade was carried on by smuggling with the connivance of the mandarins, many of whom engaged in it. It was to get a share in this lucrative traffic that independent traders began to flock to Canton in 1833 when the East India Company's monopoly of the Chinese trade was abolished.

But the abolition of the monopoly had two unfortunate results. The East India Company, as a monopolist, had been able to regulate and control it, and, being only a trading company, had no objection to paying the exaggerated deference which the Chinese officials demanded. The Crown agent who took the Company's place when the monopoly was abolished had no means of controlling the

crowd of independent traders, and could not stoop to negotiate with the mandarins in the prescribed forms. Hence difficulties at once began to arise; while the opium traffic, in private hands, grew by leaps and bounds. The Chinese Government, resolving to suppress the traffic, sent down a vigorous mandarin, who imprisoned all the British traders in Canton, and demanded that all their opium should be handed over for destruction. The British agent acceded to this demand; but this did not stop the smuggling of opium. Nothing could have stopped it, short of a prohibition of export by the Government of India, at a heavy cost to the Indian taxpayer. Relations with the Chinese became more and more strained. Rational negotiations were impossible, because the mandarins would not treat on equal terms; and in the end a wretched war broke out in 1840, which lasted for two years.

The quarrel was a sordid one; and the war has always been known as the Opium War—not quite fairly, since the British Government never questioned the right of China to prohibit opium, or did anything to force opium upon her. In reality it was a war against the Chinese resolve to exclude all European trade, and to treat the European peoples as barbarians without the law. In the end China was compelled to recognise the barbarians (1842), and to allow the entry to her markets to be forced open. She consented to admit European traders to five Treaty Ports, and to cede to Britain the island of Hong Kong, whose splendid harbour soon became an emporium not only for Western goods but for all sorts of Western influence. Sordid as it was, the war of 1840 marked an important stage in the penetration of the world by Western civilisation.

[Muir, *Making of British India*; Roberts, *Historical Geography of India*; Ilbert, *Government of India*; Boulger, *Lord W. Bentinck*; Trevelyan, *Life of Macaulay*; Marshman, *History of India*; Cunningham, *The Sikhs*; Napier, *Conquest of Sind*; Douglas, *Europe and the Far East*; lives of Auckland, Ellenborough, and Hardinge in the 'Rulers of India' Series.]

## CHAPTER XII

### THE EARLY VICTORIAN AGE

#### § 1. *The Re-establishment of Content.*

DURING the generation whose achievements have been surveyed in the foregoing chapters, Britain and the British Commonwealth had undergone a greater and a far more deliberate process of change and reconstruction than any earlier period of British history records. As a result of these changes the menace of violent revolution which loomed so darkly in the years following 1815 had been dispelled, and forebodings and misgivings had given way to an optimism that bordered on self-complacency. The Great Exhibition of 1851, in its glittering Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, expressed at once the pride and confidence which now reigned in the British communities and the abounding energy on which this confidence was based. It is worth while to analyse the moral and intellectual outlook of the nation at this resting-point in its history, this quiet-flowing pool below the cataracts. And in making this attempt we shall confine ourselves to Britain. For the mother-country was still, in a very full degree, the heart and brain of the whole Commonwealth; and the influence not merely of her power, but of her outlook and ideas, dominated all the daughter-States, which had scarcely begun to possess an independent life of their own.

The main outcome of this era of reconstruction was that the British people had regained contentment with their system of government, and even, though not so fully, with their social order. One of the most striking signs of the change was the new position of the Crown. In 1820, and throughout the period of threatened revolution, the King and almost all his family had been the objects of public scorn, and their dull vices and sordid quarrels seemed to be symbolic of the rottenness of the ruling order. But now the throne was occupied by a young and virtuous Queen, whose person challenged a chivalrous loyalty; a girl-queen,



happily married, a model of all the domestic virtues, a mirror of the proprieties which the British public loved ; and her court was stainless—so impeccably correct that already the tawdry riotings of the Regency seemed to have the unreality of a bad dream. What was more, the Queen was (or appeared to be) the model of a constitutional monarch ; no one suspected her of striving after personal power, or of being influenced by backstairs intrigue. Helped by the shrewd guidance of Lord Melbourne, and by the earnestness of her admirable Consort, she had raised the Crown out of the sphere of controversy, above the disputes of factions, and made it the very symbol of the nation's unity, the symbol also of that unity of sentiment which bound the whole Commonwealth together in spite of the growing independence of its members. She had found for the Crown a new function in the life of the Commonwealth ; not that of ruling, but that of embodying the sentiment of unity, and of representing the long pedigree of freedom.

Parliament, too, had more than regained its old ascendancy over the mind of the nation. The new machinery of local government was working smoothly and well ; and on the whole the nation was content with the system it had wrought out for itself. An equal content with the broadening freedom which had been granted them marked all the self-governing dominions ; and if there were unsolved problems in Ireland and South Africa, these vexed lands were for the moment quiescent. A full tide of economic prosperity was flowing in Britain ; there was work for all, wages were rising, and the bitter cleavage between rich and poor which had been so formidable seemed to be healing. Careers seemed to be open to talent ; fortunes were easily made ; the self-made man was common enough to challenge ambition, and most men were ready to believe that the gospel of self-help, which was the reigning philosophy of the time in the economic sphere, might well bring about general well-being.

The old ruling-class had lost their entrenched ascendancy. But in its stead they enjoyed a willingly conceded leadership, and they did much to deserve it, both by their activity in politics and by the large share which they took in the religious and humanitarian enterprises of the time. The social ascendancy of the aristocracy was as great as it had ever been, especially because the old abuses of corruption and patronage had come to an end, and because Society, like the Court, on the whole reflected the sober prosperity

of the middle class. For it was the middle class, sober, religious, conventional and self-respecting, who dictated the tone of English life in this era, and indirectly influenced the standards of Society as definitely as they shaped the course of politics, without, in either case, taking any very direct part. Even the working classes, so recently on the verge of revolt, seemed to have settled down, and to have adopted the sedate and decent ideals of the dominant class.

§ 2. *The Influence of Religious Movements.*

The supreme interests of the British people were four—business, religion, politics and sport; imaginative, æsthetic or purely intellectual interests lagged far behind with all but a very few. Business came first; and the virtues most esteemed and most cultivated were the self-regarding virtues of the business man, industry, enterprise, honesty and thrift, the virtues that make for material success. The reigning opinion of that time had no misgivings about the entire worthiness of a life primarily devoted to acquisition, for the accepted philosophy taught that it was by pursuing his own interests by honest means that a man could best serve the community.

But religion came next, among a surprisingly high proportion of the population, and it was in and through the multi-form co-operative activities of the Churches that men found the corrective for the fierce individualist competition of the time. And if religion itself was, with many, conventional and somewhat material, a matter of making the best of both worlds, that was not surprising, nor was it universal. There never was a time when the Churches were more active, or played a greater part in the lives of average citizens. New churches and chapels were rising on every hand. They were drawing under their influence thousands who had regarded them with indifference. Great evangelical revivals took place from time to time. A growing army of missionaries in all the dark places of the earth was maintained by the pennies of the faithful, and the missionary-box had become a familiar sight in thousands of middle-class homes. Nor were the dark places of the homeland altogether neglected. The elementary schools maintained by the subscriptions of the Churches were becoming so numerous that when at last the State assumed the function of education it was a relatively small gap which had to be filled. The spontaneous outpouring of charity increased in volume year by year;

hospitals, orphanages, philanthropic societies of every kind, increased and multiplied.

There is no doubt about the genuineness of the religious life which showed itself in these and many other ways. It was not merely a religion of self-cultivation ; in a remarkable degree, as the subscription lists of missions and schools and hospitals proved, the duty of giving had been impressed upon men and women of all classes. But there was an element of rigidity and narrowness in the temper of the time. There was a strong flavour of Puritanism in Victorian England, which had both good and bad influences. One feature of it was a very strict Sabbatarianism. It was in this period that the grim Sunday-silence which impresses foreigners in British towns became most marked ; we do not hear of it earlier. Cabinet meetings ceased to be held on Sundays, and Sunday parties fell out of use : an attempt was even made in Parliament to fine bishops found guilty of driving to church ; and Sunday letters were stopped. It was the Puritan public opinion of the time that put an end to duelling, which had still been incumbent upon men of honour in the first part of the period ; the practice was killed by public disapprobation. Self-indulgence and lavish living were regarded with disfavour ; and in this way the Puritan temper encouraged that worship of thrift, as one of the highest of virtues, which contributed so greatly to the economic prosperity of the country. Cards and the theatre came to be looked upon as dangerous and immoral. Of course this temper was not universal. But it was the normal temper of the time. One of its results was that the art of the theatre was almost extinguished : though the age was marked by many great names in literature, it did not produce a single dramatic writer who deserves to be remembered. Another result was the growth of that mealy-mouthed propriety, that refusal to recognise or mention unsavoury subjects, which we associate with the name of Mrs. Grundy. The novelists, like Thackeray, might protest ; Mrs. Grundy had taken her place upon the throne of Britain, side by side with Queen Victoria, and she wielded a despotic sway.

But it would be unjust to suggest that the religious and moral atmosphere of the time was insincere or merely formalist. An intense and even passionate interest was taken not only in philanthropic but in religious and ecclesiastical questions. One sign of this was the absurd excitement which was raised in 1850 when the Pope appointed a number of Roman Catholic prelates with titles drawn from

the British districts which they were to supervise. This showed that the old bitter fear of Rome still existed. But it did not lead to any real intolerance. Another sign was the vehemence of the controversies which raged over the appointment of the Broad Church Hampden to the chair of divinity at Oxford, and over the Gorham judgment in 1850. There were, however, far deeper religious issues than these ; and the period was ennobled by two deep and vital spiritual movements, the Tractarian or Oxford Movement in England, and the Disruption of the Church of Scotland ; both of which, while they raised great controversies, helped to deepen the spiritual life of the nation.

It is impossible, in a brief paragraph, to convey any just sense of the significance of the Oxford Movement. It began in 1833, with a sermon on ' National Apostasy ' preached by the saintly poet Keble ; it gained the name of Tractarian from a series of tracts which its leaders issued between that year and 1841. In its first form it was a protest against the whole Liberal movement, and in particular against what seemed to be the impiety of State interference with the endowments and organisation of the Church, such as the Liberal Governments had undertaken. Its essence was an insistence upon the Church as a living society, divinely founded and divinely guided, and joined in a mystical continuity with the days of its foundation through Apostolic Succession. This deep sense of the living organism of the Church was in sharp conflict with the exclusive concern about individual salvation characteristic of the Evangelical school, and it easily linked itself with a protest against the individualist thought of the day in politics and economics ; to the Tractarian as to the Socialist the Undying Society seemed to be more important than the restless self-assertion of the individual. For this sacred society the Tractarians naturally claimed freedom from State control. Their passionate sense of the continuity of the Divine Society led many Tractarians to abhor the crudity and violence by which the sixteenth century Reformation had been defiled ; and eventually this feeling drove some of the noblest spirits among them into the arms of the ancient Church, which alone seemed to have preserved its freedom from the sacrilegious hands of the lay power. Newman, the orator of the movement, joined the Church of Rome in 1845. Manning led a second secession in 1851, when the Gorham judgment had shown the Privy Council actually presuming to determine questions of doctrine. But the main result of the movement was its influ-

ence upon a multitude of parish clergy, in exalting their sense of the augustness of their own office, and impelling many of them to devoted labour among their flocks.

Widely sundered as were the ideas and beliefs of the Scottish Presbyterians from those of the Oxford leaders, there is one aspect in which there is a close resemblance between the Oxford Movement and the Scottish Disruption of 1843: both repudiated State control in the sphere of religion. A new vitality had come into the religious life of Scotland, as is evident in the fact that over 200 new churches were built in the six years before 1841; and one of the forms which were assumed by this more active spiritual life was a protest against lay patronage in the appointment of ministers. The General Assembly asserted the right of congregations to veto ministers appointed by lay patrons. The law-courts, including the House of Lords, upheld the rights of the patrons. The Assembly repudiated the right of any lay court, even of Parliament itself, to interfere in a purely spiritual question; and when compromise was found impossible, half the clergy of Scotland, with a self-forgetful courage which compels respect, left their churches, their manse, and their comfortable livings, to establish the Free Church of Scotland. Within a year 500 new churches had been built for them; and almost from the morrow of the great secession the new body maintained, from the free gifts of its adherents, missions, colleges and all the organisation of a great national Church, on a scale as ample as the undivided Church had maintained them before 1843. Here was a still bolder and clearer repudiation of the claim of the State to sovereignty in a sphere which did not concern it.

It is only when one realises the strength and sincerity of the beliefs which showed themselves in such ways, and which might be illustrated, if less dramatically, from the achievements of other religious communities in Britain, that one can fully appreciate how profound and how vital was the influence wielded by the Churches over the life of the British peoples. This was the main ideal force that helped to shape the course of events; and it influenced the trend of policy at home as clearly as it determined some of the principal features of the new policy in the treatment of backward peoples which distinguished this age.

### § 3. *The Early Victorian Age in Literature.*

It might be expected that a frame of mind such as we have described would not be favourable to the cultivation

of the arts ; and, indeed, this was so in most spheres of artistic endeavour. Art is of all things the most individual ; and machinery and large-scale production are not kind to it. Nor were the whole-hearted pursuit of material success, and the acceptance of rigid moral conventions, which marked this age, compatible with an undistracted pursuit of beauty. We have already noted how Puritanism had reduced the art of the theatre to a dead level of stagnation. The art of music scarcely existed in Victorian Britain, except in concert performances of foreign music. The period scarcely produced a single painter whose work is still valued. The best architecture of the time was imitative, not original, being inspired by two deliberate and artificial revivals, classic and Gothic ; and the fine and dignified tradition of English domestic architecture was killed by these revivals.

But there was one sphere in which the achievements of this time were so great as to challenge comparison with all but the greatest ages of the past ; the sphere of imaginative literature, wherein the volume and richness of the work done by this generation seem all the more remarkable by contrast with its poverty in other spheres of creative art. Perhaps the explanation is to be found in the fact that imaginative literature is necessarily concerned with moral issues, about which this age was deeply exercised.

One of the most curious features of the Victorian Age in literature was the sharpness of the cleavage which separated it from its predecessors. The dividing line came, with quite extraordinary clearness, about the year 1830. Before that year, the three marvellous young poets of the earlier age of storm, Keats, Shelley and Byron, had all died ; Scott was just at the close of his career ; Wordsworth was a survivor from the past whose best work was done ; Coleridge had ceased to write poetry, and had become a vague prophetic-voice, dimly heard of through the reports of the votaries who sat at his feet in his Highgate retreat. But in or soon after 1830 a whole galaxy of new luminaries suddenly appeared in the sky. Tennyson issued his first independent volume of poems in 1830 ; by 1850, with the publication of *In Memoriam*, he had reached almost the acme of his fame. Browning's first poem appeared in 1833, and although he had not gained great fame, much of his best work was written before 1850. Dickens was publishing the *Sketches by Boz* in 1833, and by 1850 the whole dazzling series from *Pickwick* to *David Copperfield* had appeared, and their writer had captured the hearts of the English-speaking

world. Thackeray's career as a writer began in 1837, and by 1850 his greatness had been established by the publication of *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*. Macaulay was issuing his brilliant essays in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1830, and in 1848 the first two volumes of his great *History* appeared. Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* came out in 1833, and his *French Revolution* in 1837, and by 1850 all the books and pamphlets which caused him to be regarded as the inspired prophet of his generation had been given to the world. Ruskin's first published essay appeared in 1834, when he was fifteen; before 1850 nearly all his work in art-criticism had been published. This is a sufficiently remarkable catalogue of achievement; it becomes still more remarkable when it is added that the novels of the Brontës, of Disraeli, of Kingsley, belonged to the same years, and that they saw also the publication of Grote's and Thirlwall's *Histories of Greece*, of Mill's *Logic and Political Economy*, and of a score of other works still used and valued.

Assuredly the generation which produced this rich harvest of literature and thought was as fecund in that domain as it was in industry and in politics. And widely varied as this harvest was, the character of the generation which produced it was deeply impressed upon it. To begin with, all these writers alike were marked by a note of moral earnestness, which sometimes became a little oppressive. The exuberant, irrepressible gaiety of Dickens was tinged with it as plainly as the prophetic fervour of Carlyle; it was in the tender satire of Thackeray as in the orderly and lucid reasoning of Mill; in the mellifluous strains of Tennyson as in the deliberate ruggedness of Browning; it dominated and distorted the art-criticism of Ruskin. And the standards of moral judgment which all these writers applied were, in essentials, the standards of their age, of the sober, philanthropic, hard-working, conventional Victorian time. In most of these writers, too, there was the Victorian note of optimism. It seldom rose to the jaunty self-complacency of Macaulay, but it produced a certain smugness in Tennyson, was visible behind the half-rueful smile of Thackeray, inspired the boisterous and ebullient humanity of Dickens, and was present even in the dry, doctrinaire judgments of Grote. Only, perhaps, in the dyspeptic Carlyle was this note of optimism quenched by prophetic gloom, and replaced by the prophet-like denunciations which that serious-minded generation loved none the less though its confidence remained unshaken.

In all these writers, again, there was an intense pre-occupation with the problems of political and social organisation, natural to a generation which was witnessing immense labours of reconstruction. Most of them were well enough content with the trend of political change in their own time; they were Liberals of their day, and like Tennyson watched complacently 'the stream of freedom slowly broadening down,' or like Macaulay gloried in exuberant statistics of exports and population. But there were signs among them of a different temper, of a rising protest against the heartless philosophy of the Economists. Dickens lost his geniality when he wrote of Gradgrind, his type of the heartless factory-owner. Carlyle opened his vials of wrath against a society that was content to drift, with no clear view of the path to be followed towards health and justice. Ruskin, fresh from his studies in the morality of the arts, was beginning to look out with distaste upon a world made needlessly ugly and barbarous, and was preparing to desert the teaching of art for the teaching of a new political economy which might make a living art once more possible in a healthy social order. These protests, which were to be heard, more or less clearly formulated, in most of the great writers of the time (except Macaulay), sprang from that humanitarian temper which dominated the writing of the time, as (in spite of the cruelties of the industrial system) it dominated its social life. A passionate humanity, an eager protest against cruelty and injustice was indeed the noblest note of the writing of this time. It captured even the cynic Disraeli, when he wrote in *Sibyl* of 'the two nations' of rich and poor. It drove Kingsley to write *Yeast* and *Alton Locke*, pamphlets in novel form. It inspired the fiery eloquence and the rugged pathos of Carlyle. Even the august and elegant muse of Tennyson was its servant. But its purest embodiment was in the robust, generous, full-blooded kindness of Dickens, who made his readers delight in a host of simple, absurd folk in spite of their absurdities; who had infinite compassion for all who suffer, and fierce anger only for those who oppress; whose works are brimful of jolly human kindness, and are peopled by a world of quaint lovable figures, almost all drawn from among the humble and obscure.

This galaxy of great writers rendered their country a service not less real than that which was rendered by her statesmen and the organisers and workers of her industry.



They helped to create, to refine, and to intensify a spirit which made progress in good-will more possible. They shaped the thinking and the emotions of all the English-speaking peoples in their generation, and, by enabling them to think and feel in harmony, did more than any laws or regulations to link them together in unity. Their spell is still upon us, far as we have drifted from the spirit and outlook of the Victorian age. But none of them made a more glorious gift to his people than the genial and generous soul of Dickens, the most essentially English of all great writers, who, in an age of machines and doctrinaire economics, gave to the English a new idea of themselves, and made them realise that they loved laughter still, that they valued kindness above efficiency, good sense above logic, and generosity above even justice. Dickens was no mere man of letters. He was the very voice of the great, vulgar, kindly, humorous English people; and he gave them their own true portrait to console them in a time of cruel change.

[Strachey, *Queen Victoria and Eminent Victorians*; *Letters of Queen Victoria*; Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*; Traill, *Social England*; Church, *Oxford Movement*; Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*; Wakeman, *History of the Church of England*; Hanna, *Memorials of Chalmers*; Dale, *History of Congregationalism*; Saintsbury, *English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*; Elton, *Survey of English Literature*, 1830-1880.]

BOOK X

THE ERA OF BRITISH COMPLACENCY: AND THE  
ADOLESCENCE OF THE DAUGHTER-NATIONS

(A.D. 1852-1880)



## INTRODUCTION

In the history of Europe the middle years of the nineteenth century formed a period of intense conflict and rapid change; they saw the unification of Italy and Germany, the deposition of France from the leadership of Europe, the break-up of the Turkish power in Europe, and the establishment of parliamentary government in every country save Russia and Turkey. The forces of Nationalism and Liberalism, which had struggled in vain for satisfaction during the previous period, seemed to have achieved an all but complete triumph; and the settlement of Vienna was torn to shreds. In the United States of America also there was fierce conflict; the Union was almost broken into two rival States, representing two opposing conceptions of civilisation, and the Civil War, with the painful process of reconstruction which had to follow it, retarded the advance of the great republic.

But amid these storms and conflicts the peoples of the British Commonwealth, with two exceptions, enjoyed an almost unbroken peace and a steady increase of prosperity. The exceptions were New Zealand, which was afflicted by a series of Maori wars, tedious but not dangerous; and India, which was visited by the sudden and terrible storm of the Mutiny, but thereafter settled down to a spell of placid peace such as she had never enjoyed in all her earlier history. Even vexed South Africa had an interval of peace between two periods of storm, and during this interval she acquired the rights of self-government, and began to think of the possibility of federation. Canada was united, and began her history as a single nation; Australia made very rapid progress in population and wealth, and discovered in a series of remarkable explorations the full extent of her resources. The daughter-nations of the Commonwealth were coming of age.

The mother-country also enjoyed a spell of placidity and peace, which caused her people to congratulate themselves upon their good fortune, when they compared their lot with that of their neighbours. Britain was at the height

of her industrial and commercial pre-eminence. Her institutions, which, alone in all the world, seemed to have combined stability with progress, had become the admired models upon which the other European peoples were reshaping their systems. Her prestige has never stood higher than it did during this period. She was, beyond competition, the first nation of the world. And not unnaturally a great self-complacency took possession of her people.

But self-complacency did not long remain undisturbed. It was beginning to be shaken before the end of the period. For one thing, the social contentment which seemed (but only seemed) to have resulted from the reconstructive labours of the preceding age began to be undermined. Ireland began to be restless—more restless, in spite of the first serious attempts at remedial legislation, than she had ever been during the nineteenth century. The great scientific discoveries of the age were beginning to reach the minds of ordinary men, and to unsettle long-accepted beliefs; they were also promising new revolutions in industrial life. There were ominous signs, before the end of the period, that Britain's commercial supremacy would not long be left without serious challenge. The nations of Europe, when they began to settle down after their conflicts, were at once addressing themselves to the industrial problem, and looking about for new worlds to conquer. And in unknown Africa a remarkable series of discoveries, due in the main to British explorers, were disclosing a vast field for these ambitions, which promised a new era of acute rivalry and of insecure peace for the near future.

The short age of gold (or gilded bronze) which had followed the distresses of the era of reconstruction was in truth only a stretch of level water in the course of a rushing stream of change. When the 'eighties opened, the waters were already beginning to be turbulent; and the moving stream was to run over a long series of rapids for a generation, until finally it plunged over the cataract of 1914.

## CHAPTER I

### THE RECONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE

(A D. 1852-1880)

#### § 1. *Napoleon III. and the Crimean War.*

BETWEEN 1815 and 1853 there had been peace among the States of Europe ; but it was a disturbed peace, perpetually menaced by the revolutionary movements of nationalism and liberalism. On the whole these movements had been held in check, and (except in Belgium and Poland) the system of 1815 had been maintained unbroken. Between 1853 and 1878 there was a succession of great wars, the result of which was to tear the Vienna settlement into shreds, to secure the triumph of the nationalist cause in Germany and Italy, and to bring about the all but universal establishment of liberal and parliamentary institutions. There could not be a greater contrast than that which distinguished these two periods. The main reason for the contrast was that powerful organised Governments now placed themselves at the head of the nationalist movement in both Germany and Italy, and won for it victories such as revolutionary methods had never been able to attain. Having thus secured the confidence of their peoples, these Governments found it wise to take them into partnership. Other States followed the same course, for a variety of reasons. And the result was that, in twenty-five years, the political aspect of Europe was transformed. By the end of this short period the nation-State, governed by parliamentary institutions, had become the normal and accepted type of Western civilisation.

We have seen<sup>1</sup> that in the revolutionary era from 1815 to 1850 there was at least a superficial parallelism between the course of events in Britain and on the continent of Europe. In the era of nationalist wars with which we are now concerned even this superficial parallelism wholly disappears. While Europe was being transformed, Britain was enjoying

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. ix. chap. vi. p. 364.

the most placid era in her modern history. Her very placidity increased the prestige of her system, and helped to persuade the other States of Europe to imitate her institutions. She looked on with sympathy at the great events which were taking place on the European stage; but, except by occasional diplomatic interventions, she took little part in them. She stood aloof from the European imbroglio, freed now from all entangling connexions, since Hanover had ceased to be attached to the British Crown. For that reason we need only touch in the most general way upon most of these thrilling and momentous events. The results which flowed from the unification of Germany and the downfall of France were indeed to be of profound importance for the British Commonwealth; but in the process by which these results were attained Britain was scarcely concerned, and the other members of the Commonwealth not at all.

To this generalisation, however, there is one considerable exception. There was one European problem in which British statesmen conceived that the interests of their country were deeply and directly involved. This was the Eastern Question, the problem of the future destiny of the Turkish Empire; on which Britain had committed herself (largely through fear of Russia) to the view that her interests demanded the maintenance of the integrity of the Turkish Empire. On this question alone she was drawn into active participation in European affairs; first at the very beginning of the period, when she was involved in the only European war in which she took part between 1815 and 1914; and again at the close of the period, when she was nearly involved in another war, and when a great national debate took place on this question, which in the end led to a reversal of the traditional British policy.

At the opening of this stirring and eventful period the dominating personality in the politics of Europe was the enigmatic figure of Napoleon III., Emperor of the French. Elected President of the French Republic by a popular vote in 1848, he had, by an unscrupulous *coup d'état*, overthrown the republic and established his personal rule. His system was a pure despotism, only partially concealed by the existence of powerless deliberative bodies. As closely as possible, it reproduced the system of his famous uncle. It rested upon popular support, expressed in repeated plebiscites by enormous majorities voting by universal suffrage: an untrained democracy deliberately

destroyed political liberty. But there was one popular ideal in which Napoleon III. quite genuinely believed. He was a convinced upholder of the national idea ; and he was to play an important part in stimulating nationalist movements, especially in Italy and in Rumania. His advent to power was regarded with deep distrust by the Eastern monarchies, and especially by Russia. But, perhaps for that very reason, Palmerston, who was the chief figure in the direction of British foreign policy, hastened to make friends with him ; and for a number of years the *entente* between France and Britain became more effective than ever. This informal alliance with Napoleon III. had unfortunate results for Britain. Napoleon believed that his position needed the strength that would be drawn from a vigorous and dramatic foreign policy. He wanted to force himself upon the attention of Europe. A victorious war, waged in alliance with Britain, would serve his purpose better than anything else. He saw in the Eastern Question, and in the acute rivalry between Britain and Russia, the most hopeful opportunity for such an enterprise ; and the miserable sequence of events which led up to the Crimean War was in no small degree due to his restless ambition.

It was an unhappy thing that Napoleon should have provided a disturbing factor at this moment ; for the Tsar of Russia, having been taught by the events of the last twenty years <sup>1</sup> that Europe would not permit him to make himself master of the Turkish Empire, was anxious to arrive at a peaceful solution of the Turkish problem. During a visit to England in 1844 he had urged upon Sir Robert Peel and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, that if Britain and Russia could only agree, the rest of Europe would fall in with their solution ; and he renewed the suggestion to the British ambassador at St. Petersburg in 1853. His plan was the creation of a series of autonomous Christian States in the Balkan peninsula, owing suzerainty to the Sultan, but under a sort of Russian protectorate. To this project British statesmanship could not agree. The Tsar's scheme might have been made the basis of a settlement, if an international protectorate had been substituted for a Russian protectorate ; but British distrust of the Russian despotism was too strong to make any discussion on these lines possible, all the more because, with the encouragement of the British ambassador, the Turkish Government in

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. IX. chap. vi. p. 369.



these years seemed to be making a serious attempt to introduce large political reforms.

Britain's suspicion of Russia gave Napoleon III. his clue ; and he found his chance in a long and dreary dispute which had been going on between the Greek and the Roman Churches over the custody of the Holy Places at Jerusalem. He demanded and obtained from the Sultan a recognition of the Roman claims. Thereupon the Tsar demanded that his position as the protector of all the Greek-Christian subjects of the Sultan should be recognised, in accordance with the vague terms of the treaty of Kainardji in 1774.<sup>1</sup> The Sultan refused to admit these claims. He saw himself in the lucky position of being able to count upon the support of the two great Western Powers in the event of a conflict ; and in these circumstances he was by no means eager to avoid war. Russian troops occupied the Danubian Principalities (modern Rumania). France and Britain protested and threatened. Austria and Prussia vainly tried to mediate. The British cabinet drifted and vacillated : it was deeply divided—one section, headed by Aberdeen and Gladstone, being eager to avoid war, while another, led by Palmerston, was as eager to seize the opportunity of checking Russian aggression. Meanwhile Napoleon's influence was steadily employed to bring about the war of prestige which he desired. The result was that in March 1854 Britain and France joined hands with Turkey, which had been formally at war since October 1853 ; and the Crimean War began.

It is needless to narrate in detail the events of this futile and wasteful conflict, which lasted for two years. As it was impossible to strike any vital blow against the vast mass of the Russian Empire, the allies practically confined themselves to an attack on Sebastopol, the Russian naval arsenal in the Crimea.<sup>2</sup> Though the campaign was illustrated by much heroic fighting, at the Alma, at Balaklava, at Inkerman, and in the final attack upon the fortress, as a whole it was ill-conducted. Opportunities were sacrificed ; terrible sufferings were inflicted upon the British troops by the mismanagement of the medical and supply services, which was only remedied by the noble self-sacrifice and masterful competence of Florence Nightingale. Sebastopol fell in the end, and the Russians themselves destroyed the fleet which lay in its harbour. But these successes amounted

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. VII. chap. ii p. 22

<sup>2</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 27 (a), 6th Edition Plate 68 (a).

to little. It was only because her finances were disorganised, and because she feared disturbances in Poland and elsewhere, that Russia made up her mind to yield in the spring of 1856. Napoleon won the prestige he wanted when Paris was fixed upon as the scene of the European Conference that settled the terms of peace. But he was the only gainer. Six hundred thousand human lives had been sacrificed. And what were the results?

The Conference of Paris was to have solved the Eastern Question, but it only delayed the solution, and made it more difficult. The Powers guaranteed the independence and integrity of the Turkish Empire, which thus passed under an international protectorate. But the guarantee remained effective for little more than twenty years; and its chief result was that no change could be made in these unrestful lands without agreement among the Powers—an agreement which it was all but impossible to attain. Even in this pro-Turkish settlement a breach was made in the Turkish Empire by the recognition of the 'Danubian Principalities,' Moldavia and Wallachia,<sup>1</sup> as autonomous; and before many years had passed they were united to form the principality of Rumania (1861), which borrowed a German prince in 1866. Thus the friends of Turkey themselves hastened the inevitable process whereby European Turkey was divided into a number of Christian States. Again, Russia was forbidden to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea; but this quite unreasonable prohibition remained effective only for fourteen years. It can scarcely be contended that these arrangements were a sufficient justification for the sacrifice of 600,000 lives.

## § 2. *The Unification of Italy and of Germany.*

The Crimean War was the prelude to a series of short, vigorous, decisive wars which changed the aspect of Europe within a dozen years, and established a new 'balance of power' that was to last for nearly half a century. The modern State-system of Europe was, in truth, created in the twelve years from 1859 to 1871.

First came the inspiring and gallant achievement of the union of Italy, every stage of which was followed in Britain with enthusiastic sympathy. Three revolutionary upheavals had failed to free the Italian people from the deadening control of Austria and of the despotic princelets

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 28, 6th Edition Plate 86.

whom Austria supported and controlled. The military power of Austria had to be overthrown before Italy could be emancipated. Persuaded by Cavour, the subtle and daring Italian patriot who had taken charge of the affairs of Sardinia, Napoleon III. undertook this task (1859), partly because he genuinely cared about the Italian cause, partly because he longed to win victories in the field where some of the first Napoleon's most dazzling triumphs had been won, and against Austria, the first Napoleon's most frequent victim. But after winning two victories, at Magenta and Solferino,<sup>1</sup> and driving the Austrians behind their fortresses, he lost his nerve. Dreading an attack from Prussia in the north, he withdrew before his self-appointed task was half completed. But he had started an avalanche. The little duchies of Northern Italy drove out their monarchs, and by enthusiastic plebiscites voted for incorporation with Sardinia and Lombardy. At this stage the steady diplomatic support given by Britain to the Italian cause was of high value, because it prevented a possible intervention by other European Powers. Next year (1860) the romantic hero Garibaldi, on his own responsibility but with Cavour's connivance, set out at the head of a handful of Red-shirts upon a daring filibustering expedition to Sicily, and with incredible ease and speed brought about the downfall of the Bourbon despotism in the kingdom of Naples and Sicily. A Sardinian army, sent from the north to support Garibaldi and to guard against his indiscretions, received the allegiance not only of Naples and Sicily but of the greater part of the Papal States.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 1860 all Italy save Rome and Venice and their immediate districts had been brought under the rule of Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia; the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed at Turin in 1861; and within ten years the structure of United Italy was completed by the acquisition of Venice in 1866 and of Rome in 1870. Only small fragments of the true Italy—the Alpine valley of Trent, and the port of Trieste with its neighbourhood—now remained 'unredeemed,' *irredenta*: in an astonishingly short time the long-baffled nationalist movement in Italy had achieved an all but complete victory.

Apart from the initial conflict between France and Austria (which made all the rest possible), it was a victory won not by force of arms but by a genuine expression of

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition, *Introd.*, p. 22, 6th Edition Plate 38 (a).

<sup>2</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 18 (b), 6th Edition Plate 39 (c).

popular feeling, which made resistance impossible: at every stage the process of unification was ratified by immense plebiscite majorities. And the united realm from the first assumed the guise of a liberal and parliamentary State, with institutions closely modelled on those of Britain. The unification of Italy was the purest and most unalloyed triumph of the liberal and the nationalist ideals, which here alone were fully harmonised; and when liberated Italy took her place as one of the Great Powers, it was plain that the era of reaction and repression was at an end.

The union of Italy was almost immediately followed by a yet more portentous event: the unification of Germany, which had been broken up since 1815 into thirty-nine States. Like the unification of Italy, the unification of Germany, having been attempted in vain by revolutionary means, was to be attained under the leadership of a single State, and under the direction of a powerful personality: Prussia and Bismarck were to play in Germany the parts which Sardinia and Cavour had played in Italy. But the methods pursued in Germany were poles asunder from the methods pursued in Italy. Not popular enthusiasm, but naked brute force, wielded in defiance of public opinion, was to be the means of winning victory in Germany; popular enthusiasm was captured by success, after the event. What is more, the German movement, unlike the Italian, owed nothing at all to external sympathy or aid. It was watched in Britain with a certain sympathy, indeed, but with none of the warm-hearted enthusiasm which the Italian movement had aroused. Bismarck's methods evoked a reluctant admiration, mixed with distaste.

While the Italians were winning their victory, between 1859 and 1861, the Prussian monarchy was carrying on a desperate and seemingly a losing struggle against the forces of liberalism. Since 1850 Prussia had possessed a parliamentary system; but the Crown claimed that Parliament had no right to interfere with the King's control over the army, or to withhold whatever funds the Supreme War Lord might regard as necessary for military purposes. The Crown had embarked upon a large increase and a reorganisation of the Prussian army; Parliament refused to find the money; and it seemed to depend upon the issue of this conflict whether Prussia was to become a genuinely free State or not. In 1862 victory seemed to be assured for the Liberals; the King was on the point of abdicating; and, as a last resource, he called to power the

stern and able Junker Conservative, Otto von Bismarck. Bismarck defied Parliament, collected the taxes without its consent, suppressed newspapers which dared to oppose, and completed the reorganisation of the army. His policy was violently opposed in Prussia, throughout Germany, throughout Western Europe; but he knew what he meant to do, and he went on defiantly. He told the Prussian Parliament that the unity of Germany was to be won, not by speeches and resolutions, but by 'blood and iron'; and by these means he won it.

This is not the place for any description of the three deliberately engineered wars whereby he attained his ends. First came the war of 1864, waged in alliance with Austria against little Denmark, which ultimately gave Prussia the provinces of Sleswig and Holstein, and (what was more important) gave Bismarck a pretext for quarrelling with his Austrian ally. Next followed the war of 1866 against Austria and nearly all the other States of the Germanic Confederation—a civil war wherein the sentiment of Germany was largely ranged against Prussia. Yet, after a dazzling campaign of a few weeks, Prussia's victory was complete. Austria had to withdraw from intervention in German affairs. She had to look on while Prussia made her dominion over Northern Germany nearly absolute, and while she annexed the kingdom of Hanover, the electorate of Hesse, and the free city of Frankfort, whose sole crime was that they had fulfilled their duty as members of the Confederation by joining to resist the breaker of the peace. The Austrian war and its results startled Europe, and forced her to recognise that Prussia was now a tenfold more formidable Power than she had been in the past. Still more startling were the results of the third war of the series, the war of 1870 against France, whose armies were broken beyond the possibility of recovery within two months of the opening of the campaign, while her proud capital had to submit to the horrors of a siege and the bitterness of surrender, and her northern provinces had to endure the brutalities of a military occupation. For three centuries France and Austria had been the acknowledged leaders of the European comity. Both had been brought down in ruin within five years; and in their places Germany, now united as a federal empire under the King of Prussia, strode to the hegemony of Europe—a terrible and menacing Power, efficient, ruthless and unconquerable.

Three features of this swift and trampling progress of

conquering Prussia deserve comment. The first was that the Concert of Europe was quite unable to check or interfere with these dramatic events. The Sleswig-Holstein question—a complex subject into which we need not enter, and which afforded the pretext for the Danish War of 1864—had been dealt with by agreement among the Great Powers in 1852; yet none of the parties to this settlement intervened when it was disregarded by Prussia and Austria. Britain, indeed, protested, and even raised expectations among the Danes that she would come to their aid; but she could do nothing alone, and neither Russia nor France would take action. In face of resolute and unflinching action the Concert of Europe broke down. Again, the action of Prussia in 1866 was a direct defiance of the Vienna settlement; yet none of the Powers took any action. The war was begun and ended too swiftly to make any effective action possible. Moreover, Bismarck had bought off Russia by helping to suppress a rebellion of the unfortunate Poles which broke out in 1863; he had guarded against any danger from France by a secret and vague promise of ‘compensations’ to Napoleon if Austria should be defeated; he had secured the active alliance of Italy by promising Venetia as the price of her help—a promise which he strictly fulfilled. Britain did not dream of interfering. Her sympathies were, indeed, rather with Prussia than with Austria; and since her connexion with Hanover had fortunately been severed, she was no longer directly concerned in German affairs. Finally, none of the Powers made any attempt to interfere in the Franco-Prussian War, or in the settlement which followed it. France had been on the verge of making an alliance with Austria and Italy for common defence; but the war came so suddenly that nothing came of these negotiations. And Bismarck had beforehand very skilfully isolated his destined victim, using for this purpose the suggestions of ‘compensations’ for France which he had himself encouraged Napoleon to propose. One of Napoleon’s suggestions had been that France might annex Belgium; the publication of this suggestion completely alienated British opinion from France. British action during this war was in fact confined to extracting from both belligerents a treaty undertaking to respect the neutrality of Belgium; apart from this Britain observed the strictest neutrality. In face of a determined and masterful Power, the machinery which Europe had devised for the preservation of peace thus broke down altogether.

A second striking consequence of these events was that the mind of Germany was dazzled and captivated by Bismarck's success. The dreams of peace, justice and freedom, to which German theorists had clung during the first half of the century, seemed to have been of no avail; the bitter opposition which Bismarck's policy had at first aroused was replaced by fervent admiration; and the soul of Germany, swept and empty after the failure of the democratic rising of 1848 and the collapse of parliamentary Liberalism in 1862, was taken possession of by the seven devils of militarism. Blood and iron, force and fraud, seemed to be the true path to national greatness; and even the philosophers and historians of Germany devoted themselves to idealising the traditional methods of Prussia, of which Bismarck's policy was the latest and the supreme embodiment.

Unchecked, therefore, by any common action on the part of Europe, and unhampered by the misgivings with which her own people had watched the early development of the new policy, Germany forced her way into the leadership of Europe, from which she had succeeded in hurling France and Austria. Armed, efficient, ruthless, exultant in her own unity and strength, and confident that a future yet more brilliant than her past lay ahead, she henceforth dominated European affairs. She was to fix the character of the next era.

### § 3. *The Universal Establishment of Parliamentary Government.*

The great events which had transformed the political situation in Europe between 1859 and 1871 also brought about profound changes in the systems of government both of the peoples most immediately concerned, and of other States. In Germany a new imperial constitution had to be created. By setting up a democratic Reichstag, Bismarck appeared to have satisfied the demands of the Liberals. But the Reichstag never had much power. It was overshadowed by the Bundesrat or Federal Council, which was practically under the control of the Emperor and his Chancellor; while the powers, especially of control over the army, which were reserved to the Emperor were so great that in effect Germany became for many purposes almost an autocratic State.

France also had to undertake a reconstruction of her

system. The Napoleonic Empire had collapsed with the first defeats, and a Republic had been proclaimed. But it was not until 1875 that its constitution was defined ; because the discordant monarchist parties had a majority in the Assembly that had been elected during the war, and were loth to abandon the hope of a restoration. It was no longer with the old confident optimism of 1789 or 1848 that France now addressed herself to the task of reconstruction. She had fallen from her high place ; she had had to suffer the agonies of civil disturbance in addition to those of foreign conquest, for a terrible Communist rising broke out in Paris in 1871, and had to be crushed with heavy slaughter ; she had lost two of her provinces, Alsace and Lorraine—both mainly German in race and largely in speech, but both devoted to the French tradition ; she had no friends or allies in the world, and she seemed to lie at the mercy of Germany, who, indeed, threatened her with a fresh onslaught in 1875, merely because she seemed to be recovering too quickly. It was in a subdued and sober mood that she framed her new system, which was as nearly as possible modelled on that of Britain. Yet it was to show greater stability than any of the many frames of government she had known since 1789 ; and after nearly forty years was to carry her safely through a yet greater ordeal than that of 1870.

Austria, the other fallen Great Power, was driven by her defeats to abandon the system of centralised autocracy to which she had hitherto clung. She might have secured for herself a happier future had she recognised the nationalist aspirations of her many sundered peoples—Germans, Magyars, Czechs, Poles, Rumans, Croats, Serbs—by means of a federal system. But after much discussion and many experiments during the years 1859-1867, she abandoned that idea ; and in the 'Compromise' of 1867 the Empire became a Dual Monarchy, in each half of which—Austria and Hungary—a dominant race, the Germans in the one case, the Magyars in the other, lorded it over a group of subject peoples. From that were to come many future troubles. But each half of the Dual Monarchy henceforward enjoyed, at any rate in form, a democratic parliamentary system.

Italy, as we have already noted, had adopted the parliamentary system of government from the beginning of her career as a unified State. The other European countries rapidly followed in the same track. Greece became a parliamentary State in 1863, Denmark, Sweden and Rumania in 1866, Serbia in 1869 ; while Spain, the victim of an endless



series of revolutionary disturbances, set up a parliamentary system in 1869, and reached something like a lasting settlement of her political problems in 1874. In 1852 genuine popular government had scarcely existed in Europe, save in Britain, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland. Twenty-five years later this system had, in one form or another, been adopted by every European country save Russia and Turkey, and had come to be regarded as the right and normal form of organisation for a civilised State. There has been no period in which so rapid an advance has been made by so many States in the same direction. If we consider this political change in conjunction with the transformation of the European State-system which was involved in the unification of Germany and Italy, it is not too much to say that these twenty-five years form the most remarkable period of constructive political activity that Europe has ever known.

§ 4. *The Eastern Question Reopened, 1876-78.*

But there was still another to be added to the series of great changes which we have reviewed. The Eastern Question was to be reopened, with momentous results.

In 1856 the Great Powers had taken the Turkish Empire under their protection. They had guaranteed its integrity, but had stipulated for reforms; and during the following twenty years the Concert of Europe made the Sultan's life a burden to him, with their criticisms, complaints, and constantly changing proposals. There even came into being a reforming Young Turk party, and a short-lived experiment was made with a representative Parliament. But all these large plans came to nothing. Slipshod inefficiency, variegated by bursts of outrage, continued to be the character of Turkish administration; it was made worse rather than better by the incessant meddling of the Powers. Within twenty years of the Crimean War Europe had almost abandoned hope of a reformed Turkey; only Britain still clung tenaciously to her old faith. And now the balance of power in Europe no longer ensured the maintenance of the settlement of 1856. France was too weak to count; Germany was anxiously friendly to Russia; Austria dared not move alone. Russia had already seized the opportunity afforded by the Franco-Prussian War to defy the prohibition which had been imposed upon her in regard to the maintenance of a fleet in the Black Sea. She was ready to

take independent action if an occasion presented itself; and her agents were at work fomenting discontent among the Christian subjects of the Sultan.

In 1875 a revolt against the Turks broke out in Herzegovina, a subject province inhabited by Serbs.<sup>1</sup> Montenegro and Serbia came to the aid of the rebels; they were defeated, but the rebellion was not suppressed. The unrest spread to Bulgaria (1876); and the Turkish Government dealt with it by turning loose a horde of fierce irregulars, the Bashi-Bazuks, who slaughtered, raped and plundered on a scale which horrified Europe. The 'Bulgarian Atrocities' completed the revulsion of feeling which had been growing since 1856. As we shall see,<sup>2</sup> even Britain began to waver, under the influence of Gladstone. The way was now clear for Russia; and in 1877 a Russian army invaded the Balkans. By January 1878 the last Turkish army had been put to flight; overwhelming Russian forces threatened Constantinople; and the Sultan was compelled to yield to the terms which the Tsar dictated to him.

These terms were embodied in the Treaty of San Stefano.<sup>3</sup> They required the Sultan to recognise the complete independence of Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro, which had long enjoyed self-government under his suzerainty; to recognise also a new Christian State, Bulgaria, with a wide territory extending from the Danube to the Aegean Sea; and to promise a separate administration for Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was not an ideal settlement of the Balkan problem: it did not deal fairly with Serbia, and it left many thousands of Greeks under the Turkish yoke. But it might have been made the basis of a lasting settlement. Its defect was that it did not go far enough. The British Government, however, fearing that Russia would dominate the new States, objected to it on the ground that it went much too far; and, contending that since 1856 the Balkan problem was the concern of all the Powers, Britain insisted that the treaty should be revised at a Conference of the Powers. We shall have more to say on this controversy as it affected British politics.<sup>4</sup> Here it is enough to say that a new war between Britain and Russia was very near before Russia consented to submit the question to a Congress summoned at Berlin (1878). The choice of Berlin was as great a tribute to the power of Germany as the choice of Paris had been, in 1856, to the power of Napoleon III.

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 28, 6th Edition Plate 80.

<sup>2</sup> Below, Chap. ix. p. 596.

<sup>3</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 28, 6th Edition Plate 86.

<sup>4</sup> Below, Chap. ix. pp. 595-8.

At this moment the statesmanship of Europe had a real chance of finding a permanent solution of the long-vexed Eastern Question. It failed to do so, because the mutual jealousies of the Powers blinded them to the need. Instead of improving upon the Treaty of San Stefano, the Treaty of Berlin made it more unsatisfactory. It cut down Bulgaria to very modest limits, left it still subject to the suzerainty of Turkey, and ensured future troubles by restoring the district of Macedonia to the Turk. By placing Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austrian administration, it made Austria the inevitable foe of the Serbian nationalist movement, and laid the train of the long disputes which ended in the war of 1914. The seed of many future wars and alarms of war lay in this inconclusive settlement; and it must be recognised that its unsatisfactory character was largely due to the persistence with which Britain clung to the belief that the preservation of Turkish power in Europe was necessary as a safeguard against Russia.

Yet when all is said, the Congress of Berlin formed a not unworthy conclusion of an era of rapid reconstruction. At least it marked the resumption of the practice of common deliberation among the Powers of Europe, after a period of strenuous warfare, during which the Concert of Europe had fallen into the background; and though it was an imperfect instrument, the Concert of Europe was at least a recognition of the necessity of some organisation for maintaining peace and fostering the fellowship of free nations into which Europe had at last been organised.

[Fyffe, *Modern Europe*; Hazen, *Europe since 1815*; Seignobos, *Political History of Contemporary Europe*; Débidour, *Histoire Diplomatique de l'Europe, 1814-1878*, Bourgeois, *Manuel Historique de Politique Étrangère* (vol. ii.); Guedalla, *The Second Empire*; Grant Robertson, or Headlam, *Life of Bismarck*; Cesaresco, or Oisi, *Cavour*; Bolton King, *History of Italian Unity*; Trevelyan, *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, and *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy*, Bismarck, *Recollections and Reflections* (Eng. trans.); Miller, *The Balkans*; Marriott, *Eastern Question*; Hamley, *War in the Crimea*.]

## CHAPTER II

### THE UNITED STATES AND THE CIVIL WAR

(A.D. 1815-1865)

#### § 1. *The Westward Expansion of the United States.*

DURING the forty-five years following the peace of 1815, the expansion of the United States had gone forward at an ever-accelerating pace. Emigrants began to pour out from the Old World as never before, hundreds of thousands in each year. They came at first mainly from Britain; then uncounted thousands began to stream in from unhappy Ireland, after the famine of 1822, and in yet greater numbers after the awful tragedy of 1845-6; and in the later years of the period, after the collapse of the Revolution of 1848, a great tide set in from Germany and Northern Europe. Many of these newcomers, especially the Irish, settled in the cities of the eastern coast, where they presented a new political problem. Being ignorant and unversed in political life, they readily fell into the hands of demagogues and political organisers, to whom their advent gave great opportunities; and the elaborate machine-politics of America came into being. Others joined themselves to the steady current of westward emigration.

This current, in growing volume, flowed from the older States over the Alleghanies into the great central plain; it even flowed over the Rockies to the Pacific slope, to Oregon, and still more to California, where the discovery of gold in 1848 brought a sudden inrush. The world had never seen such a spectacle of ebullient energy and adventurous advance as this generation of American history displayed. Perhaps the best indication of the rapidity with which the continent was being peopled and civilised is afforded by the rate at which it was brought under organised government. In the forty-five years between 1815 and 1860 no less than thirteen new States were added to the Union; and of the thirty-one States included in the Union in 1860, no less than sixteen lay west of the Alleghanies.

The men who were opening out these vast new lands were inspired with boundless self-confidence and optimism. They knew and cared little about world affairs; and their chief sentiments about the older world were an easy contempt for its 'effete monarchies,' and a hatred of Britain, derived from a distorted tradition of the War of Independence, and fed by the Irish immigration. They were pioneers, rude, often turbulent, self-reliant, and fiercely democratic. They had shaken off the traditions which were still strong in the Atlantic States, and the long-accepted leadership of the cultivated classes who still dominated the life of Massachusetts and Virginia. The rapid settlement of the Great West was in truth changing the character of political life in America. It was creating a new democracy, vigorous, self-confident, intolerant, ignorant, and easily led captive by phrases and sentimentalities. The new democracy of the West was prone to a flamboyant and self-assertive patriotism which did not ease relations with other States; and this accounted for the hectoring note of American diplomacy on the boundary questions in Maine and in Oregon,<sup>1</sup> and long delayed their solution. But the domineering temper of a high-spirited and self-confident people was in nothing more clearly shown than in the events which led up to the Mexican War of 1846-1848.

A number of American frontiersmen had settled in the province of Texas, which was part of the Mexican Republic.<sup>2</sup> Dissatisfied with the Mexican government, they proclaimed Texas a republic, and applied for admission to the American Union. The application was granted (1843). The Texan squatters claimed, however, a south-western frontier which Mexico refused to admit. Without any serious attempt at negotiation, American troops were sent to enforce the claim; and this brought on a two-years' war, in which the Mexicans were easily vanquished. Thereupon a vast region extending from Texas to the Pacific, and including the paradise of California with its scattered Spanish settlers, was taken from Mexico as the price of defeat. Unquestionably it was a good thing for the world that this rich and beautiful region, equal in area to several European States, should be brought under the ægis of the United States; but the manner in which it was annexed was undeniably high-handed.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 438.

<sup>2</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 57, 6th Edition Plates 78 and 79.

§ 2. *The Growing Cleavage between North and South.*

The rapid westward expansion of the United States emphasised and intensified a cleavage which had long existed in the American community. This cleavage was already apparent when the thirteen colonies asserted their independence: the social and economic system of the Southern States rested upon slavery, while in the Northern States, though slavery existed, it was an accident and an excrescence. As time passed, the contrast became more marked, because slavery had wholly died out in the Northern States by 1815. A sharp contrast had thus emerged between two distinct civilisations, which rested on two conflicting assumptions. Between the slave-holding society south of the Potomac, and the free society north of that river, there were fundamental and ineluctable differences of social ideals, and of economic interest, which made conflict between them inevitable; and this conflict formed the core of American history down to the Civil War which was its culmination.

The bulk of the immigration from Europe flowed into the Northern States, because there was practically no place for the working immigrant in the slave-holding States, where manual work was regarded as the province of the negro. Hence the Southern civilisation saw itself faced by the prospect of being swamped; and the prospect was alarming to the proud planter-aristocracy. Their fear for the future affected the political action of the Southerners in a very marked way. It led them to lay great stress upon the rights of the individual States as against the central Government, because they saw in State-rights the main safeguard of their system. They claimed for each State the right to determine for itself whether any particular act of the central Government was or was not inconsistent with the compact on which the Union rested; and, in the last resort, they asserted the right of any State to secede. The Northerners, on the other hand, while recognising the rights of the States under the constitution, regarded the Union as a whole as the real unit of sovereignty, and refused to admit any right of secession. This conflict of political doctrine showed itself very early. Thus in 1832, South Carolina, being opposed to the adoption of a new protective tariff, simply declared the Tariff Act null and void, refused to enforce it, and had to be forced into submission.

But Southern misgivings were especially shown in an endeavour to ensure that the distinctive civilisation of the South, and the slavery on which it rested, should be, so far as possible, extended to the new lands of the West. For a long time the Southerners succeeded in making a drawn battle on this subject. In 1820, after Missouri had been admitted as a slave-State, a compromise was agreed to, whereby all States to the south of latitude  $36^{\circ} 30'$  were henceforth to be organised as slave-States. This meant that America was to be divided between the two contrasted civilisations by an imaginary line running east and west. But it was into the areas north of this line that the bulk of the new population flowed; and the likelihood that sooner or later the slave-civilisation would be outweighed or swamped became greater as the stream of immigration grew in volume. It was largely the desire of Southern statesmen, under a Southern President, to enlarge the area open to slavery which led to the high-handed annexations from Mexico in 1848. Mexico had abolished slavery, which had indeed almost disappeared from the civilised world; but the lands taken from Mexico—Texas, New Mexico and Arizona—were organised as slave-States. If the South could have had its way, California would have had the same fate. But the rough pioneers who flocked to the gold-mines refused to admit slavery. They insisted that California must be 'free-soil'; and they had their way, for by that time (1848) the Missouri compromise had broken down.

It was, indeed, a losing battle that the South was fighting during these long years. Numbers, energy, and the love of freedom were all arrayed against it. It was only able to hold its own because the public men of the North dreaded the possibility of a schism, loved the Union more than they hated slavery, and were ready to make concessions to pacify Southern sentiment. Hence a new compromise was made in 1850. One of its features was an enactment which gave slave-owners the power to ~~reclaim~~ fugitive slaves who had taken refuge in free States. But when this began to be put into operation, the effect upon popular sentiment was profound. Hitherto there had been few outright Abolitionists, and these few were regarded as impractical fanatics. Now their numbers increased; and an elaborate secret organisation was created to aid the escape of slaves to Canada, where, under the British flag, no man could be treated as a slave, or legally claimed as property by any master.

Yet there were few Northerners, even when the war

began, who seriously advocated that slavery should be wholly abolished, as it had been throughout the British Empire in 1833. The Constitution forbade any such action ; for though it rested on the proclamation of the inalienable right of all men to liberty, it had left to the individual States the power of deciding whether they would permit slavery or not. What Northern sentiment demanded was that the area within which slavery was permitted should not be extended. But many men were being irresistibly driven to the conclusion that this was an illogical position. One such was Abraham Lincoln,<sup>1</sup> a gaunt giant of Illinois who had been bred in poverty, yet had trained himself to a profound simplicity and directness of thought and speech which marked him as a leader of men. He had become a lawyer and a politician ; and in the course of a campaign in Illinois he had put the position with such irrefutable clarity that he had become a figure of national importance. 'A house divided against itself,' he said, 'cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved ; I do not expect the house to fall ; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other.' Lincoln did not advocate legal abolition, which would have involved the overriding of State-rights. But he expressed the mind of the North when he asserted that it was necessary to 'arrest the further spread' of slavery, and to 'place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction.'

For a long time party divisions had been wavering and uncertain, especially in the North ; and the Democratic party, which drew its strength from the South and took a high view of State-rights, had been able to control the Government and to elect successive Presidents. In the late 'fifties the rival groups coalesced into the Republican party ; and in the presidential election of 1860 they succeeded in electing Abraham Lincoln, though only by a minority vote. The election of Lincoln was taken by the South as a sign that it could no longer hold its own in national politics. Rather than submit, the Southern leaders resolved to secede. Acting on their view of State-sovereignty, the Southern States one after another formally declared their withdrawal from the Union, and established a new Confederation of their own. If they were to have their way,

<sup>1</sup> There is a good life of Lincoln for English readers by Lord Charnwood.



the great Republic would be split into two Powers, standing for two sharply contrasted views of human rights and social relationship. The North refused to accept this situation, or to admit the existence of any right of self-determination on the part of the Southern States. It was prepared to take all risks for the maintenance of the Union ; and on this ground the field was cleared for a gigantic war.

### § 3. *The Civil War and its Consequences.*

It is needless to trace in detail the course of the desperate conflict, which lasted for four years, caused a far greater loss of life than any of the wars of this period in Europe, and ended in the abolition of slavery. The corresponding change was brought about in the British Empire at a relatively small cost, and without any use of force or sacrifice of life ; the contrast was due to the rigidity of the American constitution, which left no means but force available for the overthrow of a vicious system that it had authorised.

All the weight of numbers and of wealth lay on the side of the North ; its resolution was unshakable, and was embodied in the noble fortitude of Lincoln, who stood unwavering even in the darkest days. But the South fought with desperate gallantry, and it succeeded in producing two generals of the first rank, Lee and Jackson, against whom the North could place no one of at all equivalent quality, until Grant and Sherman emerged in the later stages of the war. The most desperate fighting was in Virginia, in the country that lay between the two rival capitals, Washington and Richmond.<sup>1</sup> In Kentucky and Tennessee, the border States west of the Alleghanies, the fighting was only less desperate. In both fields, and especially in Virginia, the South held out successfully during the first three campaigns ; and in 1863 Lee even ventured to strike north into Pennsylvania. But after a terrible inconclusive slaughter at Gettysburg (1863), the South began to be exhausted. While Grant wore down Lee in a series of dogged and murderous battles, Sherman, having won the upper hand in Tennessee, marched across the hills and down through Georgia, thus cutting the Confederation in half, and threatening the rear of the main Confederate army. This combined strategic movement decided the issue of the war ; and in 1865 the resist-

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 56 (b) and (c), 6th Edition Plate 81.

ance of the South came to an end. The victory had cost more than a million lives, and an incalculable amount of money.

But the more difficult problem of reconstruction had still to be solved. Unhappily it was not left to the upright and generous spirit of Lincoln to carry out the settlement in the magnanimous temper which he would certainly have displayed; for he was assassinated by a Southern fanatic almost in the moment of victory. Had he lived, he would have softened the bitterness of defeat for the proud South. He had always understood the Southern mind, and had abstained from venom even in the height of the conflict. The lesser men who took on the task were not above the mean temptations of revenge. Held down by Northern armies, the Southern States were forced to assent to an amendment of the Constitution, whereby slavery was abolished for ever in all the lands of the United States; and this, no doubt, was necessary and right. But slave-owners received no compensation for the loss of what public law had encouraged them to acquire as property, and many honourable families found themselves suddenly reduced to penury. The newly-emancipated slaves, quite incapable of exercising political rights, were enfranchised, and used as the instruments of a party vendetta. The Southerners, in despair, took their vengeance by organising a secret conspiracy of violence, known as the Ku Klux Klan, whose proceedings terrorised much of the South for some years. In the end quiescence returned, and time was to show that free labour brought a more genuine economic prosperity than forced labour had ever done.

But the embitterment of race-hatred which had been stirred by the war and its sequel remained; the negroes found themselves, by one device or another, excluded from all effective political power; and the problem of relationship between the two races became with the passage of time not less but more acute. The North had been right in refusing to admit slavery as a possible form of relationship between a higher and a lower race. But it had swung too violently to the opposite extreme in asserting in theory a political and social equality which could not be carried into effect in practice. It had failed to attain the just mean of a fair system of tutelage, under which the more backward race might receive (what it never attains under nominal equality) a full chance of developing all its capacities.

§ 4. *America and Britain.*

The Civil War raised many difficult problems for the Governments of other nations, and especially for the British Government. Some European observers regarded it as a heaven-sent means of reducing the formidable and growing power of the United States. This was the attitude of Napoleon III., who seized the opportunity to challenge the Monroe Doctrine by establishing a Latin Empire in Mexico under his protectorate (1863), with an Austrian Archduke as its Emperor; but the attempt was an unredeemed failure, and Napoleon had to withdraw his troops ignominiously, leaving the unhappy Maximilian to his tragic fate (1867). Long afterwards the German Bernhardt condemned the folly of Britain in losing this opportunity for the destruction of a commercial rival. But no responsible body of opinion in Britain adopted this attitude. It is true that sympathy with the South, and a belief in its ultimate victory, were general in London society. This was due in part to class-sympathy with the planter-aristocracy; in part to a vague belief that the South was fighting for its constitutional rights, for freedom to manage its affairs in its own way; in part to the fact that the South stood for Free Trade; in part to the dependence of British industry upon the supplies of raw cotton which the Southern States afforded. But the feeling of Britain as a whole was strongly on the side of the North. Hatred of slavery, which had long been one of the governing principles of British policy, was enough to ensure this. Even in the most acute distress of the Lancashire cotton-trade, which was caused by the interruption of supplies, masters and men never wavered in their support of the Northern cause; and Lincoln himself bore witness to the splendid generosity of Lancashire's attitude.

Nor did the sympathy of the British governing class for the South lead to any departure from strict neutrality. The Confederates were recognised as belligerents; but so they were by the United States Government. Britain might plausibly have protested against the blockade of the whole Southern coast by the Northern navy, on the ground that so long a coastline could not be 'effectively' blockaded, just as the United States had protested against the British blockade of the shorter coastline from the Seine to the Elbe during the Napoleonic War. But the blockade was accepted, in spite of the fact that it was causing dire distress

in Lancashire. An immense and lucrative smuggling trade grew up between British West Indian islands and the Confederate ports. The Federal Government strove to stop it by intercepting British vessels on the high seas, and confiscating cargoes consigned to Nassau or other British ports, on the ground that their 'ultimate destination' was some Confederate port. This was the assertion of a new principle in international law, the principle of 'continuous voyage'; yet Britain accepted the principle, though it ran counter to all her own immediate interests. She was to make use of it herself in the Great War against Germany, not without American protests.

But there were two questions upon which friction became very acute. One was the seizure, by an American warship, of two Confederate envoys travelling on a British vessel. This was a definite breach of international law, yet the Federal Government at first refused to restore its illegitimate captives, and for a moment war seemed to be in sight. In the end the Federal Government gave way. The other issue was more serious. Just as France, during the Napoleonic War, had had a number of privateers built and launched for her in America, so the Confederates, shut off from the sea, tried to get commerce-raiders constructed in private British shipyards. For the most part these vessels were stopped by the British Government. But four of them escaped; and one of these, the notorious *Alabama*, which did a vast deal of damage, got away from Liverpool just before the order for its arrest came down. Government had been warned by the American embassy, but its action had been delayed by the illness of an official. When the war was over, the American Government claimed compensation for all the losses inflicted by the *Alabama*. There was no valid precedent for such a claim; no such claim had been put forward, for example, in respect of the Napoleonic privateers which had been built in, and allowed to sail from, American ports. But, after long negotiations, the two Governments agreed to refer the matter to arbitration (1871). The arbitrators gave their award against Britain. They enormously reduced the original American claims; but the balance was still so large that, after every legitimate claim had been met, part of it still remains unexpended in the American treasury.

The reference of this vexed question to arbitration, and the prompt acceptance of the award, formed the greatest triumph which the principle of arbitration had yet achieved.

But it did not avail to remove the widespread hostility to Britain which existed among the American people. This hostility, based upon a distorted view of the past, was in fact intensified by the Civil War ; and in 1865 the two great English-speaking peoples seemed to be as far asunder in sentiment as they had ever been.

[M'Master, *History of the People of the United States* ; Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West* ; Rhodes, *History of the United States from 1850* ; Formby, *American Civil War* , Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson* ; Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln* , Mahan, *Life of Farragut* ; Morley, *Life of Gladstone* ; Taylor, *Running the Blockade* ; Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*.]

## CHAPTER III

### BRITAIN : PROSPEROUS, QUIESCENT, SELF-COMPLACENT

(A.D. 1852-1867)

#### § 1. *The Era of Self-Complacency.*

WHILE Europe was being turned upside down, and America torn asunder by civil war, Britain was enjoying a period of abounding prosperity and political calm, after the labours of reconstruction and the threats of revolution which had filled the years from 1830 to 1850. She dominated the commerce of the world to an extent which has never been equalled, before or since, by any single State. Although there were financial panics in 1857 and 1866, and although the cotton famine due to the American War caused much distress in Lancashire, the period as a whole was one of expansion and prosperity. Employment was abundant, wages rose steadily, and prices fell. In these circumstances the working classes ceased to take interest in the projects of social reconstruction which had earlier filled their minds. The revolutionary movement was dead : and the political energy of working men was finding more profitable channels in organisations for self-help, on which we shall have something to say later in this chapter.

The parliamentary system set up in 1832 was working smoothly, and commanded the confidence of the nation. The newspapers were filled with reports of parliamentary proceedings, which were followed with interest ; the House of Commons was felt to be the real centre of national life ; and the career of politics was recognised as the highest that men could follow. There were as yet no misgivings about the excellence of the system. During these years two classical treatises appeared, Mill's *Representative Government* (1860), and Bagehot's *English Constitution* (1867), which sang the praises of the British system as having all but attained perfection ; and it seemed natural and right that most of the States of the civilised world should be engaged

in remodelling their institutions after the British pattern. The British people were as self-complacent about their system of government as they were about their unquestioned supremacy in industry, commerce and finance.

It was even more important for the daily well-being of the community that the new system of municipal government was working well, and bringing about a real improvement in the conditions of the big towns. The towns were taking a healthy pride in their own government; they were striving to get rid of the evils which had attended their earlier growth; they were introducing sound methods of sanitation, demolishing unhealthy dwellings, equipping themselves with parks and water-supplies, public halls, libraries and galleries of art. And all this work was being carried on, with real public spirit and a remarkable freedom from corruption, by the labours of thousands of unpaid citizens.

There were dangers in the self-complacency which arose from these conditions. Those who appraised the life either of the country as a whole or of its towns by any ideal standard could see little ground for self-complacency, for the British people were still far from having reached a condition of social health; and a searching criticism of the smug ideals of the time was already being expressed, by Ruskin from one point of view, by Matthew Arnold from another, and by many other prophets of discontent. But those who were content to contrast the Britain of 1860 or 1870 with the Britain of 1820 or 1840 might well feel that there was ground for satisfaction. The self-complacency of the time was not unnatural. For the reforms of the previous period had brought real progress, and had, in a large degree, restored stability and contentment.

The general placidity of the period was reflected in politics by the absence of any great and stirring issues which aroused deep public feeling. Between 1846 and 1867 there was no discussion of principles which stirred men's passions as they had been stirred by the discussion of the Reform Act, or Chartism, or the Repeal of the Corn Laws. There were consequently no very sharp dividing lines between political parties. The Conservative party, which had seemed to be entering upon a long period of power when Peel took office in 1841, had been shattered by the Repeal of the Corn Laws. A small group of Peelites, or Free Trade Conservatives, strove in vain to maintain its separate existence; but it joined with the Liberals to form Lord Aberdeen's coalition

ministry of 1852-55, and thereafter was completely merged in the Liberal party. The great bulk of the Conservatives reorganised themselves under Lord Derby in the House of Lords and Disraeli in the House of Commons. But throughout the greater part of this period they were kept out of office by the suspicion that they were unsound on Free Trade, which had definitely been accepted as a fundamental principle of national policy. During the twenty-eight years between 1846 and 1874 the Conservatives were in office three times, but in each case only because of a division among their opponents ; and their total tenure of power amounted to less than five years. In 1852 they held office for ten months ; in 1858-9 for seventeen ; in 1866-8 for two years and a half. Apart from these intervals, the period was one of continued Liberal ascendancy. But in reality the differences between the two parties were slight, though their extreme wings, Radicals on the one side, Tories on the other, represented fundamentally different outlooks. Free Trade gradually ceased to be a dividing line, for the Conservatives were careful not to raise the question. There were sharp divisions of opinion upon foreign policy, but these cut across party lines. Yet in spite of the absence of clear-cut lines of division, the party system worked well, and played its part in making Government efficient ; it ensured that Government should always be exposed to well-informed and responsible criticism by an organised body of men who weighed their words because they aimed at winning power themselves.

Until his death in 1865 the characteristic and dominating figure of the period was Lord Palmerston : his indifference to domestic problems and his suspicion of large projects of reform both reflected and maintained the absence of exciting issues. Foreign Secretary in all the Whig ministries between 1830 and 1851, Palmerston had long been a figure of European celebrity ; and he stood for a view of Britain's part in the affairs of Europe which was highly popular, but which aroused strong opposition among both Tories and Radicals. It was Palmerston who had established the tradition of unresting hostility to Russia and of patronage of Turkey, which was the keynote of British foreign policy for fifty years. But his enmity to Russia was not based solely upon a narrow view of British interests ; he dis-trusted her government as the very type of despotism and reaction, and he honestly conceived it to be the duty of Britain to play the part of the standard-bearer of liberty



in Europe. This was the motive of his incessant and meddlesome activity. In 1850 he had won the greatest triumph of his career, when he repelled a combined attack by all his critics—Gladstone, Cobden, and Disraeli among them. The occasion of the attack was the high-handed way in which Palmerston had forced Greece to satisfy the claims of a number of British subjects, one of whom was a Levantine Jew, Don Pacifico. Palmerston used the opportunity to expound, with spirited eloquence, his view of the relation of Britain to Europe. He asserted that it was Britain's right and duty to uphold free government everywhere; and he made the proud claim that every British subject, wherever he might be, must be enabled to take to himself the old boast, *civis Romanus sum*, in the sure confidence that the strong arm of Britain would protect him. When St. Paul (also a Levantine Jew) claimed the privilege of a *civis Romanus*, Rome was the mistress of the civilised world. The superb insolence of this analogy delighted the heart of the British people; it was perhaps the highest note of that self-complacency which marked the mid-century.

As Home Secretary in the Aberdeen ministry, Palmerston had been the most eager advocate of the Crimean War. When its misconduct of the war brought about the fall of the ministry in 1855, Palmerston was the inevitable Prime Minister; and from that date until his death in 1865, except during the brief interval of the Derby ministry of 1858-1859, he retained the leadership of Government. So long as the supremacy of the gay, eupeptic old man continued, quiescence lasted in English politics, and eager reformers had to restrain their impatience. Yet there were strong and vital personalities upon the political stage. Gladstone was Chancellor of the Exchequer under Aberdeen and again under Palmerston; his ardent and intense temperament, poles asunder from that of his chief, chafed under his ascendancy; but he had to be content with the sphere of finance, to which during these years his whole strength was given. Cobden, master of lucid and cogent statement, and his friend the silver-tongued Bright, were at the height of their powers and of their public influence; but their Radicalism excluded them from office. The sphinx-like Disraeli was engaged in educating his party, and evolving a new conception of Toryism; his matchless gift of irony, his mastery of the arts of politics, and the cool and humorous detachment with which he could regard

the great game he loved, made him an inimitable chief in opposition ; but to opposition he was confined. In these men there were deeper wells of imagination and of feeling than Palmerston ever revealed. But their time had not yet come. It was Palmerston who expressed the limited, kindly, self-satisfied outlook of the time.

§ 2. *Financial and Economic Reform.*

In the absence of burning questions in domestic politics, the chief work of this period lay in the working out of principles already established, especially in the financial and economic sphere.

The outstanding feature of the time was the dominance of the school of economic thought represented by Cobden and Bright, who held that the secret of international peace and of domestic prosperity lay in the securing of the maximum degree of economic freedom. For a time it seemed as if the civilised world was going to imitate Britain's fiscal policy as well as her political system. Almost every European economist of standing was an advocate of Free Trade. Prussia had adopted a substantially Free Trade policy, and some of the lesser States of Europe were moving in the same direction. Even France made a significant advance, and France had always been staunchly protectionist. In 1860 Napoleon III. concluded a commercial treaty with Britain, which opened the French market to British goods. With singular appropriateness Cobden was the negotiator of this treaty ; and he believed, and the world believed with him, that his triumph heralded the coming victory of free interchange. On that expectation Cobden and his generation based the most glowing hopes for the future of humanity. But these hopes were short-lived. The treaty of 1860 was for ten years only. It expired almost at the moment of Napoleon's fall ; and the Republic which succeeded him refused to renew it. Soon a reaction against Free Trade began in Germany and in other countries. Britain was left to advance almost alone in the path she had chosen ; even her own colonies would not follow her ; and the prospect that commerce would soon be as free throughout the realm of civilisation as within the boundaries of each State never again seemed to be so near as it did during the 'sixties.

On the Treasury Bench the gospel of economic freedom had a convinced and ardent apostle in Gladstone, who was winning for himself, by a series of great budgets, the name

of the greatest financier of the century, with the possible exception of his master, Peel. Gladstone's budgets perfected the Free Trade system, and established the principle that no tax ought ever to be imposed which would have the effect of enriching individuals at the expense of the community. And in other ways besides this Gladstone contributed to define the methods of public finance. The most rigid of financial purists, he held that laxity in the expenditure of public funds was one of the gravest of political offences, that wealth could best fructify if it was left at the disposal of private energy, and that the State ought not to take from the citizen one penny more than was demonstrably necessary for public purposes. Under his direction the supervision of the Treasury over the spending departments, and the general control of the House of Commons over national finance, were more close and effective than at any earlier or later period. The duty of thrift, which was for that generation the first of the economic commandments, was practised as well as preached by the national Government. Private thrift, also, and widespread investment, were stimulated by legislation: Gladstone was the founder of the Post Office Savings Bank; and in 1862 the system of Limited Liability, tentatively introduced in 1837, was given its final definition in the Companies Act, which led to a great increase of investment in industrial concerns.

The dominance of Cobdenite economics was seen in other spheres besides that of finance. It influenced international relations, which were thought of perhaps too exclusively in terms of trade; and, as we shall see in the next chapter, it encouraged a scepticism regarding the value and permanence of the tie between the mother-country and the colonies far different from the attitude of the colonial reformers who had been so active during the preceding generation. It is commonly held that the economic ideas of the time also dictated an attitude of rigid individualism or *laissez faire* in the social and economic life of the nation. But this is far indeed from being the truth. Though Cobden, and still more Bright, were inclined to this view, and were, in spite of their passionate humanity, sceptical about the value of factory legislation, on this point the feeling of their generation was not with them; and the departure from pure *laissez faire* in regard to industrial organisation, which had begun in the previous generation, was carried much further in this.

Indeed the most solid legislative achievement of this time was to be found precisely in this sphere: the principles embodied in the first Factory Acts were expanded into a whole legislative code, which won general acceptance, except from a minority of employers. The early Factory Acts<sup>1</sup> had applied only to the textile trades, which were most easily dealt with because in them large bodies of workpeople were gathered in great mills. But regulation was just as much needed in other industries which were less highly organised. A series of reports by the Factory Inspectors, by parliamentary committees, and by Royal Commissions (notably a great commission on the employment of children which sat from 1863 to 1867) investigated the whole problem; and a long series of Acts (1850, 1855, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1864, 1867) extended the range of the system of regulation and the sphere of action of the inspectors to one trade after another. It culminated in two great Acts of 1867, one of which applied to all factories employing more than fifty persons, while the other applied to workshops employing less than fifty persons. In intention, and largely in effect, the whole range of industry was thus brought under State regulation; and the State definitely assumed the obligation of ensuring that all its citizens engaged in industry, more especially children, should be guaranteed a reasonable degree of safety, some protection against unhealthy conditions of work, and a rational limitation of the hours of toil. Thanks to these inquiries and discussions, men began to realise that over-work is economically as well as morally unsound, and that a regular day of ten hours is more productive as well as more humane than a regular day of thirteen hours.

This valuable code was not the result of party conflict, nor can any party claim sole credit for it. Perhaps Conservatives played a greater part in initiating these measures than Liberals; but all the Acts we have enumerated were passed by Liberal ministries except the two Acts of 1867, which were based upon the report of a Commission appointed by Palmerston's Government. There was never a party debate on any of these measures: it was not to any party, but to the spirit of the age, that the community owed the creation of this remarkable code of laws.

Whatever may be said in criticism of this prosaic age, it placed a high value upon efficiency and purity of administration; and this was the inspiration of a modest reform which

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. ix. chap. viii. pp. 394-6.

was of greater value than many measures that have attracted more attention. Public officials had hitherto been appointed solely by nomination, and the right of nomination had been habitually used for the purpose of strengthening the party in power. It is true that this abuse was never carried so far as in America; an in-coming Government in Britain never dismissed the officials who had been appointed by its predecessors. But the system led to the appointment of many incompetent men, and undermined public confidence in the public service; and this was becoming more important as the activities of the State and the functions of its officers grew. Yet it was commonly assumed that the system was unalterable; that Government could not be worked except by the use of patronage; and that (as one eminent person put it) a certain amount of corruption and inefficiency was the price that had to be paid for popular government. In 1853, however, Gladstone secured the appointment of a Civil Service Commission. The Commissioners recommended that all posts in the Civil Service should be filled by competitive examination. Neither Parliament nor the departments were yet ready for so drastic a change, and it was not until Gladstone's ministry, sixteen years later, that the recommendation was put into effect. But from 1855 onwards the Civil Service Commission required all nominees to undergo a qualifying examination before being admitted to the posts for which they were nominated. It is impossible to measure the increase in the efficiency and value of the public service which resulted from this reform.

### § 3. *Co-operation and Trade Unionism*

In permanent importance to the life of the British community, the work of Parliament was during these years overshadowed by the remarkable achievements of spontaneous organisation among the working classes. These achievements fell into two main groups, the organisation of co-operative societies, and the adoption of new methods and a new policy in the Trade Union movement. In both respects the British workman led the world; and his leaders showed a degree of solid capacity, and even of statesmanship, which augured well for the future.

The idea that groups of workpeople might, by co-operation, dispense with the capitalist employer was an old one; it had been preached by Robert Owen. But the experiments of Owen's followers came to nothing, because they

were not sufficiently definite and practical. The real beginning of co-operation dates from 1844, when twenty-eight working men opened a modest shop in Toad Lane, Rochdale, with the idea that they would supply their own needs, and intercept the middleman's profits for their own advantage. The Rochdale Pioneers achieved a rapid and a great success. Their plan was soon taken up in other places; and during the period with which we are concerned, Co-operative Stores of the Rochdale type were rapidly springing up in all parts of England, especially in the North. The movement was an admirable practical example of self-help and mutual help. It encouraged thrift; it taught the value of common effort; and it gave an invaluable training to many thousands of men and women in the art of managing common interests with honesty and good feeling.

Co-operation after the Rochdale pattern confined itself to the work of distribution. But concurrently an attempt was being made to apply the same principle to the work of production. The initiative here was taken by the group of liberal Churchmen who called themselves Christian Socialists. In 1850 they borrowed from France the idea of 'self-governing workshops,' in which the workmen were to supply their own capital, choose their own managers, and divide the profits among themselves. During the years following 1850 many 'self-governing workshops' of this type were started. They never achieved much success; but they were a sign of healthy enterprise among working people, and they showed a sense of the need for social experiment.

Far more important was the new start which was made by Trade Unionism in these years. Since membership of a Trade Union had ceased to be a crime, by the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824-5,<sup>1</sup> multitudes of little trade clubs and societies had sprung up, some of which devoted themselves exclusively to the organisation of strikes for better wages, while others also performed the functions of friendly societies. During the generation following 1825, however, most of these little bodies had been mainly engrossed in the large and vague aims of the revolutionary movement: they had been linked up with Owen's Grand National Trades Union in the 'thirties; then they had thrown themselves into the Chartist movement; and, dominated by the idea of a total reconstruction of economic society, they had been anything but successful in the more practical struggle for improved conditions of work.

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. ix. chap. iii. p. 330.

But with the failure of the Chartist agitation, and the coming of the wave of prosperity which began in the later 'forties, their aims and outlook underwent a rapid change. They began to be shy of meddling with politics, to distrust vague promises of the Millennium, and to concentrate their attention upon immediate practical issues. In this spirit a new generation of Trade Union statesmen took in hand the reconstruction of labour policy. They saw that the little local clubs, managed in spare moments by men actually at work, could not deal effectively with large problems of policy, or be strong enough to hold their own with the employers; and they set themselves to create powerful national organisations, served by officials who would give their whole time to their work, and become masters of it. The first of these organisations was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, organised in 1851 by the coalescence of several smaller bodies; and its rules were so carefully compiled that it became a model for all the rest. It demanded a weekly subscription of 1s. from all its members, and was thus able to command large funds; it offered very considerable benefits, and emphasised the friendly-society aspect of its work even more than the trade-protection side. William Allan, the sagacious and practical-minded Scot who wrought out the details of this powerful organisation, was in truth the initiator of a highly important new development; and he and his friend Robert Applegarth, who organised a Carpenters' Union on the same lines, were for some years the most influential leaders of the Trade Union movement. Other great trades followed on similar lines. In 1863 and the following years Alexander Macdonald, one of the ablest of the labour statesmen of this period, succeeded in bringing the miners into a national organisation; and cotton spinners, weavers, and other great groups, also found their way to unity. The day of the small local trade society, managed in an amateur way, was over; the day of the powerful and wealthy national organisation, directed by men of great ability and sound judgment, who gave their whole time to administrative work, had opened. The leaders of the new Unionism did not conceive of themselves as engaged in an endless struggle to destroy the existing order. They disapproved of the policy of constant strikes, which they regarded as wasteful and harmful. They looked forward to the establishment of conciliation boards in which the men, through their powerful Unions and their capable officials, would be able

to deal on equal terms with the employers, and, in effect, to share a sort of co-operative control of industrial policy.

The creation of these powerful and well-managed bodies was a real and solid contribution to social reconstruction. But most employers, having always regarded Trade Unions with suspicion, saw this striking development with alarm, and began to organise a vehement anti-Trade-Union agitation. And the course of events seemed to play into the hands of the enemies of the new movement. The tide of prosperity, which had flowed almost uninterruptedly since 1846, received a serious check in 1857. Wage-rates were reduced on all hands; and an epidemic of strikes broke out, which lasted for some years. Most of the strikes were organised, not by the great National Unions, but by the older and smaller bodies, which still clung to the view that the strike was the primary purpose for which they existed. But this distinction was not generally understood. The whole Trade Union movement was blamed for the widespread unrest. Strikes in times of bad trade (as the best leaders of Trade Unions well knew) are seldom successful; and in the bitterness of defeat some of the men took to violence against those of their comrades who chose to work on the employers' terms. These outbreaks were worst in Sheffield, which was for some years disturbed at intervals by criminal acts. Not content with 'rattening,' or destroying the tools, of the obnoxious men, the criminals even resorted to murder; and a sort of reign of terror was established. It was later proved that these atrocities had been deliberately organised by a few of the small local Grinders' Unions; but public opinion laid the blame upon Trade Unionism at large. It was in vain that the leaders of the national Unions denounced these crimes in public; judgment seemed to have gone against them in the court of public opinion, and in 1867 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the whole Trade Union question.

Meanwhile the Trade Unions had been forced to realise that their position was very insecure. All that the repeal of the Combination Acts had done for them in 1825 was to make them no longer illegal institutions; it had not legalised their normal methods of procedure. And the law courts habitually acted on the doctrine that any combination in restraint of trade was an illegal conspiracy, and that an agreement to persuade men to leave their work was a combination in restraint of trade. On the other



hand, Trade Unions as such were not recognised by the law; they could not sue or be sued in court. This might mean that they would have no remedy against an official who embezzled their funds. To guard against this danger they had registered themselves as Friendly Societies. But in 1867, when an official of one of the Unions was prosecuted for embezzlement, it was laid down in the Court of Queen's Bench that the Friendly Societies Act did not apply to Trade Unions.

Thus, in more ways than one, the law of the land, as it stood, was hostile to the useful lines of development which Trade Union statesmanship was pursuing. The law of the land could only be altered by Parliament; and Parliament was controlled by the middle class, which had been brought by the strikes and the Sheffield outrages into an attitude of distrust towards Trade Unionism. Evidently further progress could only be made if political power changed hands. And therefore the Unions were drawn on to abandon that attitude of aloofness from politics which they had adopted since the decline of Chartism. They threw themselves into the advocacy of Parliamentary Reform; and their weight contributed in no small degree to the adoption of the Reform Act of 1867.

Thus, in this period of political calm, a great social change was already maturing; and it was becoming evident that in the next period living issues of a new kind would be raised.

#### § 4. *The Fenian Movement.*

It was not only in the industrial sphere that new problems were shaping themselves during the placid Palmerstonian régime. The eternal Irish question also was beginning to assume a new form.

No attempt had been made, since the tragedy of the great famine, to investigate the causes of Irish misery, or to find a remedy. But since that dreadful event hundreds of thousands of Irishmen had emigrated to America, where many of them had won success. Nearly all of these emigrants carried with them a hatred of Britain; and it was among these exiles that a new and horrible method of directing attention to the woes of Ireland was wrought out. In 1858 James O'Mahony founded in New York the Fenian Brotherhood; and James Stephens was appointed to organise a conspiracy in Ireland, which was to be financed from America. From first to last the movement was Irish-

American; it got scarcely any support from the Irish peasantry, and none at all from the priesthood. The conspirators were busily at work enrolling supporters between 1863 and 1865. But it was after 1865, when men became available who had been trained to arms on both sides in the American Civil War, that the campaign became serious. The Irish Government, warned by an informer, was able to prevent the conspiracy from assuming formidable dimensions by arresting many of the leaders, who were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. But the danger was not at an end. Stores of pikes and cartridges were discovered; *Habeas Corpus* had to be hurriedly suspended in 1866; and during 1867 there were scattered outbreaks by bands of Irish-Americans in Kerry, Dublin, Drogheda, Limerick, and Cork. On the whole, however, the attempt to raise a rebellion in Ireland was a failure; the peasantry would not move.

But the Fenians did not limit their activities to Ireland. In 1866, 1200 Irish-Americans made a sudden raid into Canada, across the river Niagara. The invaders were repelled by Canadian volunteers. The American Government tardily repudiated the disturbers of the peace whom it ought to have prevented; but refused to contemplate the payment of compensation, or to admit that there was any analogy between the Fenian invasion and the *Alabama* case. Finally, in January 1867, the Fenians resolved to 'carry the war into England.' In February some 500 of them assembled in Chester, intending to attack the Castle; but Government was forewarned, and the attempt came to nothing. In September two suspected burglars, arrested in Manchester, were discovered to be Fenians, and sent to the city gaol; but on the way, in the public street, the prison van was attacked by a band of men armed with revolvers, and when the sergeant in charge of the prisoners refused to give up the key, he was murdered by a shot through the key-hole. Twenty-six of the gang, however, were captured, with the aid of the crowd, and three of them were hanged. They are known as the 'Manchester Martyrs.' Finally, in December of the same year, two Fenians tried to blow up Clerkenwell Gaol. The explosion killed twelve and injured about 100 inhabitants of a poor street beside the gaol, but had no other effect.

These cowardly and abominable outrages formed a poor mode of serving any cause, and they aroused in Britain a just indignation. Yet they served a purpose which more

legitimate methods might have failed to serve. They made men think again, and more seriously, of the neglected problem of Ireland, and of the shame which it brought upon the name of Britain. In especial, the problem of Ireland took possession of the mind of Gladstone, which it was to dominate for the remainder of his life.

§ 5. *Parliamentary Reform : the Act of 1867.*

Thus in several ways it was becoming apparent that the placidity of the Palmerstonian age would not last much longer. The death of the old statesman (1865) would in any case have been followed by a new period of political activity. But this activity was rendered far greater, and given a new direction, by the fact that it began with a measure of parliamentary reform so considerable that it may fairly be described as marking the beginning of democracy in Britain.

There is a marked contrast between the events which led up to the first Reform Act, and those which led up to the second. The old ruling class had resisted to the last before it accepted the Act of 1832 ; and the agitation for reform (which started in 1769) had been going on for sixty-three years before it won success. But the middle class, which was enthroned in 1832, was far less obstinate. Its tenure of power had lasted only thirty-five years when the franchise was thrown open to the artisans of the towns ; and the concession almost bore the aspect of a voluntary abdication. Though there was no violent demand for political change, both political parties vied in hastening it, and the House of Lords itself offered no opposition. Assuredly the middle class showed no jealousy of power.

Throughout this period, indeed, there was a succession of Reform Bills in which nobody took much interest, but which showed the existence of a feeling that the system of 1832 could not be permanent. Lord John Russell, the author of the 1832 Act and the purest of Whigs, introduced mild and tepid bills in 1852 and 1854 ; the first was killed by the fall of his ministry, the second by the outbreak of the Crimean War. John Bright did his best, after the war, to rouse the working classes, and to convince them that they were being wronged by their exclusion from political power. But even his moving eloquence could not arouse any strong feeling. In 1859 Disraeli, the Conservative leader, tried his hand, producing a complex set of proposals which led to the defeat of the Government on an amendment to enlarge the scope

of the bill. Next year Lord John Russell again returned to the attack ; but the Palmerston Parliament showed such apathy, and the public out of doors such indifference, that the bill was withdrawn. In 1864 the question was revived by a Liberal private member ; and the occasion was memorable because it drew from Gladstone the declaration that 'every man who is not presumably incapacitated . . . is morally entitled to come within the pale of the Constitution.' The assertion marked Gladstone's definite transition to political Liberalism ; but his chief, Lord Palmerston, had no taste for reform, and this bill died like its predecessors. Once again, in 1865, John Bright took up the cause on public platforms. He got more response than before, but still the public interest was no more than tepid. There was assuredly no vehement demand for political change. Men of all parties had advanced schemes of reform ; and each in turn had been blanketed by complete indifference. There could be no more striking illustration of the deadness of political life during the Palmerstonian era.

After Palmerston's death, Russell and Gladstone introduced a new measure (1866), so moderate that it would only have enfranchised some 400,000 electors. They knew they had to deal with the Palmerstonian House of Commons ; and even this modest measure was met by a violent opposition, in which the Conservatives were reinforced by a 'Cave of Adullam,' as Bright called them, of Liberal malcontents, led, with much eloquence and vigour, by Robert Lowe. The discussion was far more vigorous than any of its predecessors ; and it ended in the defeat and resignation of Russell's Government. At last the interest of the country was aroused. Suddenly the British people realised that they wanted reform ; and with remarkable promptitude wrought themselves into a state of excitement. Bright's platform speeches no doubt helped ; but the main cause of the changed temper was that the Trade Unions had made up their minds that political action was necessary. Leagues and demonstrations were organised ; there were processions and mass meetings, and when the authorities tried to prevent a demonstration in Hyde Park by closing the gates, fifty yards of railings were pushed down by a high-spirited and perfectly good-humoured crowd.

The Liberal ministry, defeated on reform by Conservative votes, was succeeded by a Conservative ministry ; whose first action was—to introduce a Reform Bill ; for Disraeli had resolved to secure if possible for his own party the

leadership of the new electorate. In its first form the bill proposed to confer the franchise on all householders in towns if they paid their own rates, and on all occupiers in the country who were rated at £15; but to pacify the Conservatives, educational and property qualifications were added, and allowed to confer upon their holders a second vote. But the Liberal opposition, led by Gladstone, swept away these qualifications, conferred the vote on lodgers, and lowered the county franchise; and the bill emerged from the discussions a far more democratic measure than any that had earlier been introduced. Many Conservatives were indignant that such a measure should have been passed by their party; Lord Cranborne (later Lord Salisbury) denounced it as a 'political betrayal which has no parallel in our annals'; and Lord Derby himself described it as 'a leap in the dark.'

In this strange way Britain entered upon her career as a democracy; and the definition of the new electorate was as much the work of the Liberals as of the Conservatives. Both of the leaders who now faced one another as rivals in the House of Commons accepted the new order of things without dismay. For Gladstone had become a whole-hearted Liberal; while Disraeli, who was never a Liberal, but a believer in Race, had always disliked middle-class rule; had said as long since as 1846 that he would prefer to rely upon 'the invigorating energies of an educated and enfranchised people'; and now looked forward with confidence to the scheme of Tory democracy which he had invented—of a democracy, that is, which, he hoped, would loyally accept the leadership of a traditional ruling class. It was indeed a new era, of more imagination and greater courage, upon which the British people were now entering.

[Low and Sanders, *Political History of England 1837-1900*; Walpole, *History of Twenty-five Years* (1856-1870); Paul, *History of Modern England*; McCarthy, *History of our own Times*; Buxton, *Finance and Politics*; Morley, *Life of Gladstone*; *Life of Cobden*; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*; Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*; *Letters of Queen Victoria*; Holyoake, *History of the Rochdale Pioneers*; Fay, *Co-operation*; Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*; Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*.]

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ADOLESCENCE OF THE DAUGHTER-NATIONS

(A.D. 1850-1880)

#### § 1. *British Colonial Policy in the Palmerstonian Era.*

IN the greater British colonies, as in the mother-country, a quiet period of consolidation and of expanding prosperity, devoid of exciting incidents, followed upon the active reconstructive work of the decades after 1830. But, quiet as it was, this was a time of very great importance in all the great colonies. They were reaching the stage of maturity, and, without losing their attachment to the Commonwealth, were learning to value their independent statehood, and beginning to think of themselves as nations.

What especially stimulated this development was that, having now acquired self-governing powers, they were in an extraordinary degree left to themselves. The group of enthusiastic colonial reformers,<sup>1</sup> who had done so much to fix the character of the new colonial policy during the previous era, had either died or ceased to exercise much influence; and with them disappeared, for a time, their zeal for the ideal of an intimate partnership of free peoples. The belief that soon or late, and better soon than late, the colonies must become independent States, was accepted by the statesmanship of this generation almost as an axiom. It was held not by Cobden or by Gladstone only, but by Palmerston and (until the later years of the period) by Disraeli. Lord Brougham, who was Permanent Under-Secretary of the Colonial Office from 1860 to 1871, has expressed this view with great frankness. 'I had always believed,' he writes, 'that the destiny of our colonies is independence; and that in this point of view the function of the Colonial Office is to secure that our connexion, while it lasts, shall be as profitable to both parties, and our separation, when it comes, as amicable, as possible.'

The prevalence of this view had drawbacks, but it also had advantages. It avoided all friction in the settlement of the colonies' claim to fiscal independence. Lord Grey

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. IX. chap. x. p. 421-4.

had striven to establish complete Free Trade within the Empire, but the colonies had regarded this policy as a restriction of their liberty. Lord Grey's successors raised no objection when Canada set up a tariff against Britain in 1859, or when some of the Australian colonies began to follow the same course. Again, the view was accepted that the colonies must provide for their own defence. In 1862 Parliament decided that all regular troops stationed in the colonies (there had been as many as 50,000 in 1859) should be gradually withdrawn, and the process was practically completed in 1873; while in 1865 an Act was passed empowering the colonies to organise naval forces for their own defence. Officers were sent out to Canada in 1868 and to Australia in 1875 to aid these colonies in organising their defensive system. But no attempt was made to discuss the general problem of imperial defence, because this problem was never considered as a whole by a generation which took it for granted that the imperial tie must in course of time be dissolved.

But it was only for a short time, and mainly in the 'sixties, that these doctrines wielded an unchallenged ascendancy in British politics. As early as 1866 Charles Dike, intellectual heir of the Radical Imperialists of the previous generation, published a book under the challenging title of *Greater Britain*, which ran through several editions; while in the 'seventies another Radical, W. E. Forster, began the public advocacy of Imperial Federation. Disraeli, also, who in 1852 had spoken of the colonies as 'millstones round our necks,' was in 1872 denouncing his opponents for having striven 'by continuous, subtle and energetic efforts . . . to effect the disintegration of the British Empire,' and was asserting that 'self-government ought to have been conceded as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation.' Neither the indifference of the 'sixties, nor the revived interest of the 'seventies in the ideal of a commonwealth of free peoples, was the monopoly of any political party. Each was the outcome of the reigning temper of the time; and perhaps each represented a necessary stage in the development of the Commonwealth. But in this period, more than in any other, the history of the various colonies is disparate and disconnected.

## § 2. *The Growth and Federation of Canada.*

Canada had been stagnant and unprogressive until she received the boon of responsible self-government; but

from that moment her progress was swift. Her population grew from a million and a half in 1840 to more than three millions and a half in 1871. She was showing a feverish energy in the construction of roads, canals, and railways wherewith to weld together her widely scattered settlements. As late as 1851 she had only 66 miles of railway : by 1867 she had more than 2000 miles, and after the federation which was achieved in that year progress was still more rapid. New centres of population were beginning to spring up in the West.<sup>1</sup> The great central plain, indeed, was practically closed to settlement by the Hudson Bay Company, and the only plantation in this vast area was the little Scottish colony which had been founded on the Red River (Manitoba) by Lord Selkirk in 1811. But beyond the Rocky Mountains colonisation had begun. The Hudson Bay Company had a small station on Vancouver Island, which obtained a representative assembly in 1856 ; next year (1857) gold was discovered on the Fraser River, on the mainland of British Columbia ; and this led to the organisation of a new colony in 1858, which was in 1866 united with Vancouver.

But there were certain aspects of the condition of the Canadian colonies in the 'sixties which caused a good deal of perturbation to their leaders. They were falling into economic dependence upon the United States. The links of trade did not bind the colonies to one another, they bound each group separately to its nearest American neighbours. The main trade-routes ran north and south, not east and west. And this dependence was increased when in 1854 a reciprocity treaty with America was negotiated, and when in 1859 a tariff against British goods was imposed. It was this trade dependence which made many people believe that the absorption of Canada in the United States was ultimately inevitable ; and in the 'sixties there were many Americans who were inclined to take even violent means to hasten this process. But nine out of ten Canadians disliked the idea of absorption in the United States. The tradition of the United Empire Loyalists of 1782 was still alive, and 1812 was unforgotten. Canada's aim, though it was not yet very clearly formulated, was the status of a free nation within the British Commonwealth. But if the Canadian colonies were to be made strong enough to resist the powerful attraction of their great neighbour, they must combine their resources. The

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 57, 6th Edition Plates 78 and 79.



idea of federation had long been entertained. It had been advocated by Lord Durham in 1839. It was adopted as a definite policy by the Canadian Conservative party in 1858; and within ten years it was a realised fact.

This rapid achievement was due to the fact that a political deadlock had arisen, for which federation seemed the only solution. The Act of 1840, which united Quebec and Ontario, had produced admirable results in forcing the French and the English to work together. But it rested upon an *equipoise* between the British and the French provinces, which had an equal number of representatives. The inrush of new immigrants, however, threatened to disturb this balance. Most of them went to the British settlements in Ontario, which not unreasonably demanded that their increased population should be reflected in an increased representation; and the French feared that this would involve a re-establishment of British racial ascendancy. To separate the provinces, and to federate them, seemed to be the only fair mode of dealing with this difficulty. Moreover the two political parties were so nearly balanced that ministries changed constantly; and in their rivalry they were tempted to appeal to the racial feeling of the two provinces, the Liberals being strongest in Ontario, the Conservatives in Quebec.

Happily the rival party leaders were wise enough to see that a scheme of federation might at once provide them with a way out of these difficulties, and at the same time strengthen Canada against the United States. In 1864 a conference was held which included representatives from both parties and both races in Canada proper, and from all the maritime colonies. They succeeded in arriving at a complex agreement in seventy-two clauses, in the framing of which the leading part was played by the supple mind of Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Macdonald, the Conservative leader. The scheme was submitted to and adopted by the various Parliaments, though not without violent opposition, especially in Nova Scotia. Then a final conference was held in London; and in 1867 the British North America Act was passed through the British Parliament without alteration. Canada had become a nation.

The Canadian scheme of federation—the first of a series which have marked stages in the development of the British Commonwealth—was marked by two outstanding features. The first was that it deliberately avoided the model of the United States. Taught by the Civil War, Canadian states-

manship determined not to allow the component States to claim too high a degree of independence. Hence, while in the United States the central Government was only allowed certain defined powers, all residual powers remaining with the individual States, in Canada the central Government reserved all powers that were not specifically allotted to the subordinate bodies; and, to underline the distinction, the component members of the federation were described not as 'States' but as 'Provinces.' The second distinctive feature of the Canadian system was that it avoided the American plan of drawing a sharp distinction between the spheres of the executive and the legislature, and followed the British plan of making the executive directly dependent upon the legislature. This method (which was later followed by Australia and South Africa) has made it easy for the great members of the British Commonwealth to work in harmony; for all can be represented by Prime Ministers who speak for majorities in their respective Parliaments.

The Act of 1867 was the charter of Canadian nationhood. But much had to be done before this great Dominion was effectively wrought into a single State. Some of the colonies were slow to join: Manitoba was organised as a province in 1870, British Columbia came in in 1871, Prince Edward Island not until 1873; and Newfoundland has never joined at all. In Nova Scotia there was a reaction against federation, so strong that for some years a majority of the Nova Scotian representatives were pledged to work for a repeal of the Act. It was only the steady progress of the Dominion in other ways that overcame this reluctance.

In 1869 a great step forward was made when, with the aid of the British Government, the Hudson Bay Company was bought out, and, while retaining its trading rights, ceded to the Dominion Government the vast and almost unpeopled area which it had controlled. But there was some trouble ere the Government's authority was fully established. A French half-breed, Louis Riel, organised a rebellion among the lawless and adventurous half-breed trappers who had settled alongside of the Scots on the Red River. Riel's aim seems to have been the establishment of a French Catholic State; but he was backed by a body of American conspirators who wanted to seize this fertile territory for the United States. He held his own against the officers sent from Ottawa to administer the territory; and the rebellion did not collapse until a British force was sent to deal with it under Colonel (afterwards Lord) Wolseley

in the spring of 1870. Then the Province of Manitoba was constituted; and the settlement of the Great West began.

The maintenance of order and justice in this vast wilderness was no easy task for a young Government; and it was made more difficult by the fact that bands of Red Indians were fleeing over the frontier from the United States to claim the protection of the British flag. Yet the task was admirably performed, and the Canadian West never suffered from anything like the savage Indian wars and the sordid lawlessness which long disfigured the American West. The reasons for this were two. One was that ever since 1763<sup>1</sup> a sound tradition of fair dealing with the Indians had been enforced by the home Government; and this tradition was maintained by the Dominion Government. The second cause of success was the magnificent work of the North-West Mounted Police, a small and finely-disciplined force, which was created in 1874. Largely recruited from among the adventurous youth of the mother-country, the 'Riders of the Plains' won for themselves an all but stainless reputation for daring, energy, and resourcefulness in the enforcement of justice.

But before the scattered colonies could be welded into a single State, they had to be bound together by effective communications; and it was no easy or profitable task to drive railway lines through the wooded wilderness that separated the maritime provinces from central Canada, or across the immense western plains. The work could not be left to private enterprise, the resources of the State had to be employed. As soon as the federation was established, a railway from the maritime provinces to Quebec and Montreal was undertaken. The main link in this line (which was known as the Intercolonial Railway) was completed in 1876. Still more important was the task of linking the central provinces with the Pacific coast. British Columbia came into the Dominion in 1871 on a definite promise that a Pacific railway should be constructed, and plans for such a railway were promptly set on foot by Sir John Macdonald. A company, which was to be backed by support from Government, was organised; but the project was wrecked by the discovery that Macdonald had been receiving large sums from the company for electioneering purposes. This scandal postponed the great undertaking for ten years, and it was not until 1881 that it was seriously begun. Thus the task of welding half a continent into a single State, though

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. VII. chap. xi. p. 135.

it had been well begun, was still far from being completed : the real establishment of Canadian nationhood remained to be achieved in the next period.

### § 3. *Australia : the Gold-Finds and their Consequences.*

Australia was a full stage of development behind Canada, and she had not yet reached the stage at which unification could be attempted. Indeed, it was only in this period that the tale of her separate colonies was completed : Victoria was separated from New South Wales in 1852, and Queensland not until 1859. Still almost an empty land, Australia's greatest need was a rapid increase of population. But the Wakefield system, whereby so large an immigration had been brought about during the 'forties, was abandoned after the establishment of responsible government, and none of the colonies save Queensland had any scheme of assisted emigration. With America and Canada so much more easily accessible, it might have been expected that, in the absence of all special inducements, Australia would have attracted little of the stream of emigration from the motherland. This expectation was largely realised in Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia. It would have been realised also in Victoria and New South Wales but for the discovery, in 1851 and the following years, of rich deposits of gold, which brought an extraordinary inrush of adventurers.

The first find was in New South Wales, but far richer discoveries soon followed in Victoria ; and towards these gold-fields a rush of diggers poured in, first from the towns and the neighbouring settlements, and then from Britain. The population increased by leaps and bounds. That of Victoria rose from 77,000 in 1851 to 237,000 in 1854, 538,000 in 1860, and 720,000 in 1870 ; while New South Wales rose from 187,000 in 1851 to 348,000 in 1860. In 1867 a less valuable gold-field was opened in Queensland, and the population, which had stood at 20,000 in 1859, rose to 125,000 in 1871.

It was an unruly and turbulent population which was thus suddenly drawn into the gold-bearing colonies. In 1854 there was even a little rebellion among the diggers of Victoria, in protest against the enforcement of a charge for license to dig ; and the atmosphere of lawlessness produced an outburst of 'bushranging,' which raged in both Victoria and New South Wales as late as 1860. At first,

also, there was a serious dislocation of agriculture and industry in all the colonies, thousands of settlers deserting their occupations in the hope of becoming rapidly rich. But the early confusion soon came to an end. By 1860 the lawless diggers had been for the most part displaced by organised mining companies, which put the industry upon a more stable footing. And even before this happened, it became apparent that the gold-rush had given a healthy stimulus to both agriculture and manufacture. For the mining population had to be fed and clothed; and the demand thus created stimulated agriculture not only in New South Wales and Victoria, but also in South Australia. Agriculture increased so steadily that it began to press upon the lands hitherto devoted to sheep-runs, and occupied by 'squatters' who paid only a modest quit-rent; and the difficult land-problem of Australia—the problem of opening suitable lands for arable farming without disturbing the wool trade and doing injustice to the 'squatter'—began to be acute.

The rapid growth of population also made it necessary to open up the country by means of roads and railways. As in Canada, private enterprise, unaided, could not successfully cope with the task of opening up almost virgin lands. The early private companies nearly all failed; and, almost from the outset, the Australian colonies were driven to embark upon State undertakings on a very large scale. For this purpose loans were raised in a somewhat reckless way. Before 1850 none of the Australian colonies had any public debt; by 1880 the five leading colonies had built up public debts to an aggregate of more than £65,000,000, almost wholly for railways and other public works. A good deal of this expenditure was wastefully administered, and much of it could not bring in an early return; and the result was that there were at intervals serious financial crises. Thus in 1866 Queensland was on the verge of State-bankruptcy: she could not pay her railway contractors, and bands of wageless navvies were marching on Brisbane, vowing to hang all the ministers and loot the town. But despite these troubles, all the Australian colonies save Western Australia had made very great advances, and were on a fair road to prosperity, by 1880.

Meanwhile the heroic age of Australian exploration, which extended from 1857 to 1874, had mapped out the whole continent;<sup>1</sup> even the terrors of the great central desert

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 65, 6th Edition Plate 87 (a), where the main routes are shown.

were faced and overcome. We cannot pause to describe this work in detail ; but no record of the achievement of the British peoples should omit mention of the heroic and tragic expedition of Burke and Wills across the central desert from south to north (1860-1), or of Stuart's successful accomplishment of this journey in 1862, or of the bold journeys of Forrest and of Giles, in the 'seventies, by several routes across the torrid wastes of Western Australia.

During this period of development the institutions of self-government, set up in 1855, were receiving their trial. At first they did not work very well ; and the British statesman Robert Lowe, who had spent many years in Australia, used its constitutional squabbles, in the discussions on the Reform Bills of 1866 and 1867, as a terrible illustration of the dangers of democracy. Ministries were everywhere unstable and little respected. There was incessant conflict between the two houses of the legislatures, during which the lower houses were sometimes tempted to override violently the powers of the upper houses ; and the Governors, sent out from Britain, had to use infinite tact in dealing with these situations. The Australian settlements were, in truth, naturally marked out for complete democracy, being quite free from sharp social distinctions ; and as a result of these conflicts they developed during this period into the most democratic communities in the world. Everywhere the widest franchise was adopted : everywhere the second chamber was reduced to comparative insignificance ; and all the colonies save backward Western Australia had made themselves ready, by 1880, for those bold and far-reaching experiments in State Socialism which were to attract the attention of the world in the next period.

#### § 4. *New Zealand : Maori Wars and Political Unification.*

Of New Zealand the same story has to be told as of Canada and Australia ; a story of growing strength and unity. When responsible government was established in 1856 the white population was considerably under 60,000 ; by 1878 it had reached about 350,000. In 1856 the population was so scattered that six self-governing provinces were established, three in the North Island, and three in the South Island, with a central federal legislature which met at Auckland ; and the provincial bodies were far stronger than the federal body, because the links between the provinces were exceedingly slight. By 1876 the

provinces had been so much more closely welded together that the continued existence of the provincial legislatures was felt to be superfluous; and in 1876 they were abolished, and New Zealand became a single unitary State, with its capital at Wellington, the most central point for the two islands. The process of unification had thus been carried much further than in Australia; further even than in Canada.

But it is significant that the bulk of the new population in this period went, not to the North Island, where the process of settlement had begun, but to the South Island: in 1856 the North Island had three-fifths of the total white population; in 1874 it had little more than one-third. The reason for this was that the North Island was the land of the Maoris, and for more than ten dreary years, 1860-1871, there was almost incessant war between the Maoris and the settlers.<sup>1</sup>

The trouble was caused, in the main, by disputes about land-sales; the complex and vexatious land-tenures of the Maoris were too readily disregarded. But the Maoris' love of fighting contributed to prolong the struggle. To guard themselves against the gradual process of expropriation, a number of Maori clans in the central part of the North Island formed themselves into a loose confederacy under an elected king, and took up arms against the encroaching settlers; and for ten years the central region of the North Island was the scene of incessant fighting. In the rough and wooded country where they were at home, the Maoris held out with great gallantry, often against overwhelming odds, offering a splendid defence in their stockaded forts against considerable bodies of regular troops as well as large forces of colonial volunteers. During the greater part of this long Iliad they showed as much chivalry as gallantry, risking their lives, for example, to bring water to their prisoners; and it was only in the later and more desperate phases of the struggle that some of them dropped their Christianity and revived old superstitions and ferocities. But the war was not a bloody one on either side: in ten years the Maoris' loss in battle was only estimated at a total of 3000—less than they lost by an epidemic of measles in a single year. In the end they were driven to peace by sheer weariness. But they had fought long enough and well enough to win the respect of their adversaries. The colonists themselves agreed that four Maori representatives

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 65, 6th Edition Plate 87 (b).

should sit in the colonial assembly. And a wise and tactful land-minister, Sir Donald McLean, overcame the root difficulty by arranging terms for the sale of lands which at once salved the pride of the chiefs and secured that the Maori should keep possession of a sufficient amount of land.

The long and dragging Maori war checked the progress of the North Island, except its northern extremity, which was undisturbed. But it interfered very little with the advance of the South Island. For gold was discovered on the west coast in 1856 and 1864, and in the highlands of Otago, round Lake Wakatipu, in 1861-2; while coal also was found in the hilly south. Dunedin became a great exporting centre; the rich province of Canterbury developed its agriculture to feed the new mining population; and roads and (later) railways began to be built to supply these demands. In the North Island also both gold and coal were found. Once the Maori wars were ended, development became rapid. There were only seven miles of railway in New Zealand in 1870; there were twelve hundred miles in 1880. As in Australia, railway development was only possible under State control and it was financed, as in Australia, by very large loans. This policy of lavish capital expenditure was begun by Sir Julius Vogel between 1869 and 1876. It brought great immediate prosperity, and a large increase of immigration; and though it was followed by a long period of depression in the years after 1878, it launched New Zealand, like Australia, upon a series of bold experiments in social legislation in advance of what had been attempted elsewhere in the world.

But in 1878, at the close of the period with which we are now concerned, these experiments, though foreshadowed, had scarcely yet begun; the main results of the period were that the infant colony of 1856 had attained political unity and a large degree of prosperity, had overcome its troubles with the Maoris, and had reached the stage of adolescence.

#### § 5. *South Africa: Twenty Years of 'Laisser Aller' and its Effects.*

Even in vexed South Africa these were years of quiescence and prosperity; an interval of calm between two periods of trouble. Since the conventions of 1852 and 1854,<sup>1</sup> the two Dutch republics had been left to go their own way. Despairing of finding a solution of the complex problems

<sup>1</sup> See above, Bk. IX. chap. v. p. 432.



presented by the differences between Dutch and British, and by the rival claims of blacks and whites, the British Government had done its best to wash its hands of the whole business; and Lord Grey had gone so far as to say that Britain had no interest in South Africa beyond the maintenance of a naval station in Table Bay. For a time this policy of *laissez aller* seemed to be successful. It gave to South Africa an interval of rest from controversy, during which the four States—Cape Colony, Natal, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal—seemed to have a distinct and separate development. But even during this interval events in all four were converging, and forces were at work which were to bring about a new period of trouble. South Africa could not be divided into water-tight compartments; what affected the interests of one settlement affected the interests of all.

In Cape Colony the period was one of real advance and prosperity. The white population grew from 76,000 in 1849 to 237,000 in 1875. The most amicable relations existed between Dutch and British. There was, indeed, a new Kaffir war in 1850-53, but on the whole the frontier was kept in order by an efficient frontier police; while the native population within the colony was learning to live peaceably under the ordinary machinery of law, and the missionaries were carrying on among them an admirable system of training. Above all, this period saw the establishment, at last, of representative government in Cape Colony; a legislature of the familiar pattern being instituted by an Act of the British Parliament in 1853. The most striking feature of the system was that it gave equal political rights to blacks and whites, under a moderate property qualification. Few blacks, it is true, actually exercised the franchise; but the contrast between this system and that of the two Dutch republics, where every coloured man was excluded from civil rights, was significant. The new system worked reasonably well, though there was a good deal of friction between 1862 and 1872. In the latter year full responsible government was established. Thus Cape Colony took its place beside Canada, the Australian colonies, and New Zealand, in the fellowship of free States.

As in Canada, partnership in self-government eased racial friction; and the experience that this was so led to the suggestion that a federal system should be established for the four South African States. The project was put forward in 1858 by Sir George Grey, who had been sent to vexed South Africa

after his successful work in South Australia and New Zealand. If it could have been carried out, South Africa would have been saved from an infinity of future trouble. And in 1858 the prospects of success seemed rosy. Natal would have raised no objection; the Orange Free State was willing to join; even the Transvaal was conscious of its own weakness. One great advantage of a federal scheme would have been that it would have ensured a uniform policy towards the independent native tribes. But the home Government, loth to assume new responsibilities in relation to the Boer republics, refused its assent; and the favourable moment passed. The idea of federation did not die, but it became more difficult of achievement as time passed.

While Cape Colony had at last attained full self-government, the younger colony of Natal remained throughout this period—and, indeed, until 1893—under a Crown Colony system, with a Lieutenant-Governor and a small Council partly nominated and partly elected (1856). The reason for this slow development was that the white settlers were very few (less than 8000 out of a total population of 172,000 in 1852), and were mainly concentrated in two towns; while the bulk of the population consisted of Bantu tribes which, instead of being brought (like the natives at the Cape) under the ordinary machinery of the law, were left under the rule of their own chiefs in large native reservations. This system was cheap and easily managed. But it had its dangers, which were illustrated in 1873-4, when one of the chiefs broke into revolt on being called to account for smuggling arms. He had been in communication with other tribes; and the episode formed a warning of the ever present danger of native risings.

This danger was especially great in Natal, because its territory bordered on the land of the formidable Zulus,<sup>1</sup> whose power was being reorganised during these years by the able chief Cetywayo. During his father's life-time Cetywayo had built up again (1856-72) the old military system of Chaka, which the Boers had broken;<sup>2</sup> and when he became king in 1872, there was real ground for fearing that he might become an active danger. His warlike preparations must be meant for some use; and his only possible foes were his neighbours, Natal on the one side, and the Transvaal on the other. The situation in the Transvaal, as we shall see, invited his attack. But whether

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (e), 6th Edition Plate 89 (d).

<sup>2</sup> See above, Bk. IX. chap. II. p. 430.

he turned his strength against the Boers or the British colony, a Zulu war was certain to raise far-reaching disturbances. To the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal, who had charge of relations with the Zulus, the policy of the Transvaal Boers was a matter of constant anxiety. Nothing showed, more clearly than the Zulu problem, the difficulty of treating South Africa as if it were divided into water-tight compartments; and it was partly because of the Zulu danger, and the possibility of its being stirred up by the Transvaal, that the Government of Natal was less hostile to a scheme of federation than the Government of any of the other South African States.

A similar danger was apparent in the Orange Free State, which suffered from serious disorganisation during the ten years following the independence that had been forced upon it in 1854. South-east of the Free State, between it and Natal, lay the lands of the warlike Basutos. It was the desire for protection against the Basutos which had made many of the Free State Boers reluctant to accept the gift of independence in 1854; and the legitimacy of their fears was shown by the fact that in the years following 1858 they had to face four successive wars with the Basutos. They had the worst of it in the first two of these wars, thanks to their own disorganisation; and it was this which made them ready for federation.

In 1864, however, an able President, J. H. Brand, took control of affairs in the Free State. Under his competent rule the Free State settled down to the enjoyment of quiet prosperity, and became the model of a peaceful farmer-State. But before this was possible, Brand had to undertake the fourth and last of the Basuto wars. He was so successful that he almost succeeded in conquering and annexing the whole Basuto territory. The Basutos, however, appealed to the Governor of Cape Colony; and as they had formerly been a protected State, the Governor interfered, and concluded with the Free State a treaty whereby Basutoland, reduced in area, was formally recognised as a British protectorate (1869). Since that date the Basutos have lived in peace in their mountain valleys, supervised at first by the Cape government, and later (1884) by a British President, learning the rudiments of civilisation from the missionaries, but keeping other white men at arm's-length. This was an excellent solution of the problem. But not unnaturally the Free Staters felt that they had been robbed of the fruits of victory; they felt they had a grievance against

the British power; and now that the Basuto peril was removed, their desire for federation evaporated.

And ere long they were given a new and more solid grievance. An event full of portent for the future history of South Africa happened in 1867-1868. Diamonds were found in the valley of the lower Vaal, and by 1870 crowds of diggers and speculators, mostly Englishmen, were flocking into a country which had hitherto been purely pastoral and agricultural. The diamond-fields lay on the western border of the Free State, round the modern Kimberley, in a thinly-peopled region where no precise boundaries had ever been drawn.<sup>1</sup> Ownership was claimed both by the Free State and by the native State of the Western Griquas. The Free State set up a temporary system of administration, but it did not work well. Then the Griqua chief, Waterboer, offered the sovereignty of the district to Queen Victoria; and in October 1871 the offer was accepted, on the assumption that the Griqua claim was valid, Griqualand West was annexed, and the British Government assumed the responsibility of maintaining order among the rough population of the diamond-fields. The Free State protested in vain; all it got (1876) was the sum of £90,000 as compensation. But the very payment of compensation seemed to be an acknowledgment of its claim; the whole transaction bore an aspect of high-handed greed, and the Free State was seriously alienated. Yet there was something to be said in favour of the British Government's action. It was the only power in South Africa which could effectively control the rough mining-population; a farmer-State without a police force or an army was ill-equipped for such a task; and the British Government neither made nor hoped to make any profit out of the diamond-fields. But a new and ominous factor had appeared to add to the difficulties and misunderstandings of South African politics.

Meanwhile trouble of another kind was brewing in the Transvaal. Its settlers had been the most restless and adventurous among the original trekkers of 1836. Though, even as late as 1877, they numbered only 8000 or 10,000, they had spread themselves in scattered groups over a very wide area, and they had never succeeded in establishing a system of orderly government. Until 1860 they were divided into four distinct republics, constantly at strife with one another, and with their neighbours of the

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (d), 6th Edition Plate 89 (a).

Free State, whose territory they actually invaded in 1857. After 1860 there was civil war for four years, at the end of which Martin Pretorius as President, and Paul Kruger as military commandant, began the task of creating some sort of unified authority. But they had little success. The republic was bankrupt; it could not collect its taxes or pay its officers; there were no roads, and the rivers were unbridged; and the burghers obeyed orders, or not, as they thought fit.

This might not have mattered if the Transvaal had been an isolated region. But it was surrounded by native tribes, with whom there was perpetual friction. The powerless Government could not control its subjects. It could not stop slave-raiding, which undoubtedly went on, or prevent such episodes as the onslaught upon the Bechuana tribe among whom Livingstone was working, when his house was pillaged in his absence—perhaps, as he believed, by the Boers. On all sides the Transvaal Boers were stirring up trouble among the African peoples, and it was felt that their restless anarchy was a menace to all the white settlers. And, owing to their divisions, they were far from successful in their native wars. Between 1865 and 1868 they were driven out of a large region in the northern Transvaal, known as the Zoutpansberg. Then they waged wars against the Baralong tribes in the west until their raids were checked by a definition of the frontier (1870) in an award by Keate of Natal. In 1876 they entered upon war with King Sekukuni in the eastern Transvaal, which was currently believed to have been conducted with such atrocious cruelty that it called forth repeated remonstrances from the British High Commissioner and the Secretary of State. They were stirring up all South Africa. Distant chieftains sent complaints and petitions to the British Government. King Khama wrote from the far north of Bechuanaland to beg for the protection of the Queen. 'There are three things which distress me very much,' he wrote, 'war, selling people, and drink. All these I shall find in the Boers.' Even Lobengula, king of the remote Matabele, sent a message to the High Commissioner to report his fears of a Boer attack.

But the most dangerous fact of all was that there was constant friction between the Boers and the formidable Zulu, Cetywayo. The Boers had occupied territory (Utrecht and Vryheid) which Cetywayo regarded as part of his do-

minions.<sup>1</sup> They asserted their supremacy over the Swazis, whom Cetywayo regarded as his vassals. Throughout the 'seventies it was only the influence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Natal which staved off war between the Transvaal Boers and the Zulus; and it was becoming more and more difficult to hold Cetywayo in restraint. If a war with the Zulus should break out, all native Africa might take flame. All native Africa (influenced by the missionaries) looked to the British Government to deal with the situation.

It was becoming increasingly evident that the interests of all the South African States were inextricably intertwined; that the folly of any one of them might endanger all the rest; and that their policy towards the natives ought to be guided by uniform principles. Evidently the policy of strict non-intervention which had been adopted in the 'fifties had its dangerous side. In 1874 the ministry of Disraeli came to power in Britain; and Disraeli's Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, inaugurated a new policy. He was convinced that federation, which Sir George Grey had vainly advocated sixteen years before, was the only solution of the South African problem. In 1874 he sent the historian Froude on a propagandist mission to South Africa, with no useful results. In 1876 he summoned a conference in London to discuss the problem; it came to nothing, for the South African States, with the exception of Natal, refused to consider the project. But Carnarvon would not accept defeat; and he obtained from Parliament a permissive federal Act to make action easy if the temper of South Africa should change. And in 1876 he appointed to the Governorship of Cape Colony and to the High Commissionership of South Africa perhaps the ablest man whom that country had yet welcomed—Sir Bartle Frere, an Anglo-Indian administrator of wide experience, and a convinced supporter of the policy of federation, which he was instructed to do everything in his power to realise.

Meanwhile Sir Theophilus Shepstone, the Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, who knew more about South African native questions than any other man, had poured into Carnarvon's ears his misgivings about the Zulus and the Transvaal Boers; and, independently of Frere, Shepstone returned to Africa with a commission to inquire into conditions in the Transvaal, and with large powers to take such action as he might think best. Shepstone went to the Transvaal. He found it bankrupt and in a state of anarchy; and he also found that many of the more respon-

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (e), 6th Edition Plate 89 (d)

sible burghers, including the President, Burgers, regarded with dread the prevalent confusion and the prospect of a Zulu war. Some of them petitioned to be taken under British protection; and Shepstone, giving more weight to the opinions he liked than to those he disliked, decided that the only way of averting a catastrophe was to throw the ægis of British power over the Transvaal. In April 1877 he declared that country annexed to the British Crown, and promised that it should be endowed with full self-governing powers under a scheme of federation. The annexation was meant partly as a step towards federation, partly as a warning to Cetywayo not to attack; ere long it brought the onslaught of his fierce *impis* upon the British power.

The annexation of the Transvaal ended one epoch in the history of South Africa, and opened another. It ended the epoch of non-intervention, which had indeed yielded an interval of peace, but which had, in the opinion of many, led to a complicated and dangerous situation. Now the policy of non-intervention was to be reversed, and replaced by a policy of federation. South Africa was to be invited to reconcile its differences in a free self-governing federal union, wherein the rights of Dutch and British, of blacks and whites, were all to be reconciled under the ægis of the British Commonwealth. A sincere and lofty ideal inspired this change of policy. But it failed to take account of the passion of independence and the strong racial feeling which forty years of strife had engendered among the Boers. Instead of peace, the new policy brought a sword: the annexation of the Transvaal, far from bringing unification, was the beginning of a generation of friction, conflict and embitterment.

The history of the British colonies during this period of quiescence is almost devoid of romantic or exciting episodes; and for that reason its significance has been too much disregarded. In truth a great thing had been insensibly achieved during these years. The colonies had reached the stage of adolescence; they had taken up the responsibility for their own welfare; they were becoming conscious of themselves not as subordinate and dependent settlements, but as communities with distinct personalities of their own. Canada and New Zealand had achieved unity as well as freedom; Australia was manifestly tending in the same direction; even in divided and distracted South Africa the

ideal of unity had come to birth. These young and vigorous peoples were ceasing to be colonies ; they were becoming nations.

[Egerton, *Short History of British Colonial Policy* ; Dilke, *Greater Britain* ; Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* , Todd, *Parliamentary Government in the British Colonies* ; Egerton and Grant, *Canadian Constitutional History* ; Grant, *History of Canada* ; Greswell, *Dominion of Canada* , Parkin, *The Great Dominion* ; Jenks, *Australasian Colonies* , Rogers, *Historical Geography of Australasia* ; Thinne, *Australian Exploration* ; Reeves, *Long White Cloud* ; Lucas, *Historical Geography of South Africa* ; Theal, *History of South Africa*.]



## CHAPTER V

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TROPICS

#### § 1. *The Revival of Interest in the Tropics.*

IN the early days of British colonial expansion it was towards tropical or sub-tropical lands that attention was most eagerly turned, because these lands supplied goods which the temperate zone could not produce for itself. In the nineteenth century a great change in values took place. The abolition of the slave-trade, followed by the abolition of slavery, produced a revolution in tropical trade. Most of the tropical or sub-tropical commodities needed for British industry, notably raw cotton, could be got in the way of trade without any necessity for conquering and administering the territories on which they were grown. What were now mainly needed were markets for British manufactures, and homes for the surplus population of the crowded islands; and temperate lands offered at once the best markets for manufactured goods and the only suitable fields for emigration.

During the generation after 1815, therefore, British interest in the tropical regions was greatly diminished; or, rather, it became mainly philanthropic instead of mainly commercial. To stamp out the slave-trade, or to give protection and encouragement to the hundreds of heroic missionaries who had found their way to every corner of the heathen world, had become the chief motives which prompted British statesmanship to interfere in the affairs of tropic lands. And these motives did not seem to necessitate annexation of territory. The missionaries were inclined for a long time to argue that the primitive peoples should be left undisturbed, to find their way to civilisation under missionary guidance. The tropics fell into the background; those tropical colonies which Britain already possessed were neglected, and no new ones were acquired. But about the middle of the century a change began to come about. The reasons for this change were partly

commercial, partly philanthropic, and for some time the philanthropic motive had the greater force.

The commercial motive for taking a new interest in tropical lands was the need of new tropical products for the purposes of industry. In this period only one such product had yet become important. This was oil, which was wanted for the lubrication of steam engines and machinery, and for the manufacture of the soap that was being used in increasing quantities by the growing populations of grimy towns. Oil was obtained from the palms and ground-nuts of the West Coast of Africa, and from the copra (dried coco-nut kernels) of the Pacific Islands; and these lands therefore became of increasing importance to industry.

The philanthropic motive was supplied by a change in the attitude of the missionaries. They had lost faith in the efficacy of leaving primitive peoples undisturbed, and had come to believe that firm and just government by a civilised Power was necessary to protect the primitive peoples from their own barbarism, as well as from the unscrupulous exploitation of the worst type of traders. The missionaries had therefore become, in many regions, strong advocates of annexation. Most of the petitions to be taken under British protection, which came in surprising numbers from African or Polynesian chiefs during this period, were inspired by the missionaries. Moreover, when missionaries and explorers penetrated more deeply into savage Africa, they found that the iniquities of the old West African slave-trade were as nothing in comparison with the ugliness of the slave-traffic that went on in the interior of Africa. Against this traffic the navy could do little or nothing; the only remedy was annexation, followed by firm and just government. In the Pacific also a new labour-traffic was growing up which in its worst forms was practically a sort of slave-trade. The British Government, which had laid upon itself the task of putting an end to the traffic in slaves, was therefore called upon to annex new lands in pursuance of this aim. It resisted the call as long as it could. But in some instances this motive for the increase of territory exercised a real influence.

For these reasons there was a revival of interest in tropical territories during the quarter of a century following 1850; and it had its effect both in the policy adopted towards the old tropical colonies and in the acquisition of new ones.

§ 2. *The West Indies : Governor Eyre and the Reaction against Self-Government.*

The old splendour and riches of the West Indies had received their death-blow when slavery was abolished in 1833, and West Indian trade was never again to possess the importance which had belonged to it in the eighteenth century. But after the middle of the nineteenth century the West Indies began slowly to revive. The revival was stimulated by the introduction of free labour. Indian coolies, mostly of low Hindu castes, were brought in under a system of indentures carefully supervised by the Government of India. When their term of service was over, most of them remained and sent for their wives; and within a generation Indians had become a substantial element in the population of some of the West Indian colonies. By 1875 over 170,000 Indians were permanently settled in the West Indies, and most of them were thriving and content. They form to-day about one-third of the population in British Guiana and Trinidad.

The West Indies were in truth passing through a transition from one economic order to another. The transition was not an easy one. But with one exception it caused no outbreak of unrest. The exception was Jamaica, where in 1865 a brief but violent negro insurrection broke out in one small corner of the island. The rising seems to have been due to economic distress, and it took the form of a demand for the abolition of rent. Martial law was proclaimed by the Governor, Mr. E. J. Eyre; and the rising was stamped out in a few days. But martial law was maintained longer than was necessary, and under its cover some serious injustices were committed. The episode aroused a storm of controversy in England, where some, amongst them John Stuart Mill, denounced Governor Eyre as a tyrant, and stigmatised his action as an example of the brutal disregard of the rights of a subject race by a dominant oligarchy; whilst others, like Thomas Carlyle, defended Eyre as a heroic saviour of society. Both judgments were exaggerated. But it is true that Eyre went too far, under the influence of the panic-struck aristocracy of planters who lived in dread of negro revolt.

The discussion about Governor Eyre's action had one important result—it convinced men that representative government was unsuitable for any land in which a small number of members of a ruling race were set among an

overwhelming majority of backward and ignorant subjects. And the Jamaica planters had come, from a different point of view, to the same conclusion. They did not wish to be made responsible, in the eyes of the excitable negroes, for all the acts of Government; still less did they wish to admit the negroes to political power; and they therefore resolved to sacrifice the self-governing powers which they had enjoyed since the seventeenth century, and petitioned Parliament to abolish the representative system and to substitute a Crown Colony form of government. This was done by an Act of 1866.

But Jamaica did not stand alone. In 1870 British Honduras, and in 1876 St. Vincent, Grenada and Tobago, petitioned for the abolition of representative government; and the petitions were granted. The only West Indian colonies in which representative government survived this period were the Leeward Islands and Barbados; and even in these cases the executive was not responsible to the legislature. The principle which was implicit in these changes was that representative government is unsuited for lands in which backward and primitive peoples predominate. Henceforward this principle was applied in all the tropical colonies. The seventeenth century had unhesitatingly given self-governing powers to the small groups of white men who lorded it in tropic lands: the nineteenth century broke away from this practice precisely because it denied that the interests of the white man were alone to be considered, while it recognised that the backward peoples were not yet ripe for self-government.

### § 3. *West Africa: the Beginning of a New Development.*

If the abolition of slavery made a break in the history of the British West Indies, the abolition of the slave-trade in 1807 made a still more definite break in the history of the West African settlements, which had existed mainly as bases for this traffic. At that date there were three distinct British settlements, all purely coastal trading-stations. There was a port at the mouth of the Gambia River—the only West African river which is navigable from its mouth by ocean-going vessels; there was a settlement at Sierra Leone, the best harbour on the West Coast, which had been founded as a place of refuge for emancipated slaves; and there were several stations on the Gold Coast, which had always been the principal centre of European trading

activities.<sup>1</sup> The Gold Coast stations, of which Cape Coast Castle was the chief, were sandwiched between Dutch and Danish settlements; and behind them lay the powerful and ferocious native kingdom of Ashanti, which constantly threatened their existence. All these settlements were in the hands of the Africa Company, which was wound up in 1821. If the West African stations were to be preserved, Government would have to maintain them. This seemed scarcely worth while. Many urged that they should be abandoned; and this would have been done if it had not been that these posts formed useful bases for the campaign against the slave-trade, in which the navy was incessantly engaged; while missionaries had started work in all the settlements, and were trusting to British protection. So far as trade was concerned, the settlements seemed to have no value; they were merely a burden and a cause of needless expenditure.

In 1827 the Gold Coast forts were handed over to a committee of London merchants. Their agent, George Maclean, contrived to establish so great an influence over all the coast tribes that in effect an informal British protectorate was established, under whose shelter the missionaries did admirable work, while the trade in palm-oil began to be valuable. But about 1840 reports began to come to England that stores were being supplied to foreign slave-dealers; and under pressure of public opinion Government had to assume direct control once more (1843), not only over the forts on the coast, but over the tribes behind, who had learnt to resort voluntarily to British justice. In the next year the tribes between the Ashanti kingdom and the coast made voluntary agreements to renounce human sacrifice, and to refer all serious crimes to the jurisdiction of the Queen's officers. This is an illustration of the way in which the authority of a civilised government expands when it is brought into contact with primitive barbarism.

In 1850 the Danish Government sold its forts on the Gold Coast to Britain, and in 1871 the Dutch Government, whose Gold Coast forts entailed a dead loss of £20,000 per annum, made a similar arrangement. The British Government now controlled all the Gold Coast ports, and could levy customs duties to meet part of the cost of administration. A small force of native troops was organised to maintain order. Domestic slavery was brought to an end among the native tribes. The British Protectorate, extending some forty

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 64 (c), 6th Edition Plate 89 (c).

miles inland, was learning the benefits of peace and law. And the trade in palm-oil, now rising into importance, was bringing prosperity to the native owners of the palm trees.

But this development alarmed the inland warrior-kingdom of the Ashanti. The Ashanti king had thriven on the slave-trade; and Britain had brought it to an end. He had been accustomed to raid or plunder the coast-tribes; and Britain was protecting them. The Dutch had paid him tribute; but now the Dutch had disappeared from the coast. In 1873 this savage potentate made an attack upon the British Protectorate with 40,000 men, overran the lands of the protected tribes, and was with difficulty driven back from the coastal forts. To remove this menace once for all, an expedition was organised under Sir Garnet Wolseley, which invaded the Ashanti kingdom, burnt its blood-stained capital of Coomassie, and forced its king to renounce his claims on the Protectorate, to abandon human sacrifice, and to give free access to trade. The Ashanti power was broken; its subject tribes revolted; and the trade-routes to the interior were thrown open. Henceforward the Gold Coast colony was a thriving centre of trade; while, under the protection of a strong Government, missionaries laboured to civilise the savage tribes.

Meanwhile a new settlement had been established farther east. The island of Lagos, commanding the only outlet for a network of rivers and lagoons, had long been the haunt of piratical slave-dealers. In 1861 Lagos was occupied as a means of waging war against the slave-trade. But it soon turned out to be a valuable commercial centre; it gave access to a rich palm-bearing region, and became the port for what were known as the Oil Rivers. Britain had insensibly become the dominating Power on the West Coast. Nearly all the trade of the coast was in her hands. She had no European rivals save France, who still clung to her old settlement of Senegal; but Senegal was of insignificant value in comparison with Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos. It is true that the direct authority of the Governors of these four colonies extended only a few miles from the coast. But traders and missionaries carried British influence far inland; and for almost all the tribes of this region Britain represented the civilisation of the West.

The story of the expansion of the West African colonies during this period of quiescence is a characteristic story. It took place in spite of the real unwillingness of the home

Government to assume new responsibilities. As late as 1865 the House of Commons resolved that no new treaties or annexations ought to be made in West Africa, and that the evacuation of all the settlements ought to be the ultimate aim of British policy. That was a sincerely held opinion. But a civilised and progressive Power, brought into contact with barbarism, could not fail to advance. However reluctant it might be, philanthropy and trade combined to force upon it a steady increase of power and responsibility.

#### § 4. *The Pacific Islands and the Annexation of Fiji.*

Among the lovely isles of the Pacific, as on the malarial coast of Africa, Britain was being reluctantly drawn during this period into the assumption of political authority; and, in the one case as in the other, the impelling forces were primarily philanthropy and secondarily trade.

It was the missionaries who first brought the islanders into contact with European civilisation. The London Missionary Society sent out thirty missionaries as early as 1796 to Tahiti and Tonga; soon native catechumens, trained by them, were spread far and wide among the islands; in no region of the world were missionary efforts more eagerly welcomed or more rapidly successful. Other missionary bodies joined in the work, mainly in the southern or Polynesian Islands. Some Roman Catholics from France joined in; and their efforts were made the ground for a French annexation of Tahiti (1843) and New Caledonia (1853). But the bulk of the work was due to British missionaries of all the sects, who wielded a powerful influence over their converts. In 1849 and onwards the Church Missionary Society undertook the conversion of the fiercer islanders of Melanesia, and its work was ennobled by the tireless energy and courage of two great missionary bishops, Selwyn and Patteson. Under the guidance of such men, "Western civilisation" made its appeal to the islanders in the happiest form.

But alongside of the missionary came the trader, seeking first of all sandal-wood, which was sent to China to be turned into tea-chests, and there exchanged for tea to be sold in Australia. Then a trade in coco-nut oil grew up; it was greatly expanded when an ingenious German firm invented copra (dried coco-nut), which could be easily stored and easily carried (1868), and from this time onwards Germans shared the trade with British merchants. The Americans also

were active ; and the British monopoly which had existed in the beginning of the century had already come to an end by 1870. Nevertheless Britain held an overwhelming preponderance in the trade of the South Pacific, as in its religious and civilising activities. In the eyes of the islanders Britain was the supreme representative of the power and wisdom of the white man ; and when other European nations began to show an eagerness to annex islands, many chieftains petitioned to be taken under British protection. To all these requests the British Government was deaf.

The traders who haunted the islands were often rough and high-handed ; they were seldom on good terms with the missionaries ; they often cheated or misused the islanders. Hence the missionaries became advocates of annexation as a means of keeping the traders in order. The Australians and New Zealanders, too, awoke to a keen interest in the islands : the island trade was mainly carried on from Sydney and Auckland, and they did not wish to see it checked or diverted by a foreign Government which would impose protective duties, as the French had done in Tahiti. In 1870 a conference of the Australasian colonies demanded a British protectorate over Fiji, over Polynesia, over Melanesia and New Guinea. But still the British Government remained obdurate.

Yet another motive for annexation was afforded by the labour-trade, whereby 'Kanakas,' as the islanders were called, were transported as indentured servants for work of various kinds. Often enough this traffic (which became active in the 'sixties) was carried on quite justly, by voluntary agreements with the labourers. But it lent itself to abuses ; at its worst it was little better than the slave-trade of West Africa ; and many iniquities were perpetrated by brutal traders. The result was that the natives of some of the islands learned to hate and to fear the coming of the white man, and often revenged their wrongs upon the innocent. In 1871 the heroic Bishop Patteson was murdered in one of the islands of the Santa Cruz group as a result of the misconduct of one of the labour-traders ; and Government was driven to action. What island petitions, and missionary representations, and Australian conferences had failed to obtain was made inevitable by the tragedy of Nukapu.

An Act of Parliament was passed (1872) condemning kidnapping, requiring licenses for the transport of labourers,



and defining the procedure for trying offenders. A second Act appointed a High Commissioner for the Western Pacific to enforce these provisions, and gave him jurisdiction over all British subjects in all the islands, and power to hold local courts and make regulations. But the High Commissioner must have a headquarters. In 1874 the chiefs of Fiji once more begged for annexation. The opportunity was taken; and Fiji became a British colony, and the seat of a High Commissioner exercising some sort of jurisdiction over all the islands of Polynesia and Melanesia not already annexed by other Powers. These far-scattered archipelagoes were not annexed; there was nothing to prevent other Powers from annexing them; but in effect they passed under a British protectorate.

Once again the spreading British Empire had been expanded into a new sphere, in spite of the extreme reluctance of the mother-country.

### § 5. *The Exploration of Tropical Africa.*

It is a strange fact that although the outline of Africa was disclosed to Europe earlier than that of any other continent, it was the last of the continents to yield up the secrets of its interior. During three and a half centuries an endless succession of European sailors of all nations had circumnavigated its coast on the way to India and the East; every trading nation had planted trading stations on its shores; but the process of exploration was very slow until the middle of the nineteenth century. Before 1850, indeed, the course of the Nile was known beyond Khartoum; Mungo Park had traced most of the course of the Niger, and his successors, Clapperton and Lander, had completed the exploration of that river; missionary explorers in South Africa had reached the Limpopo; the Sahara had been crossed; Timbuktu had been reached; and some Portuguese travellers had crossed the continent from Mozambique to Angola, but had left no effective record of their discoveries. Apart from these journeys the vast and populous territories of Central and Northern Africa were unknown; the great lakes were only a rumour; the Congo and the Zambezi were only known at their mouths. But in little more than a quarter of a century after 1850 all these mysteries were revealed, and Africa was laid open, ready to be exploited, during the next period, by the European Powers. As we have already seen, the interior of Australia was explored

during the same period ; and with these two achievements to its credit this quarter of a century deserved to rank as the greatest in the history of exploration, next to the generation which began with Columbus's great voyage.

It is a legitimate ground for pride that the lion's share in these remarkable achievements belonged to British explorers. Many Frenchmen, Portuguese, and Germans took part, and names like Duveyrier, Nachtigal, Yunker and Schweinfürth will always rank high in the history of African exploration. Some of the greatest German explorers, Barth, Krapf, and Rebmann, worked in the service of Britain. But the supreme names of African exploration are British names : Livingstone, Burton, Speke, Baker, Grant, Cameron, Stanley. It was they who unrolled the curtain which hid Africa from the eyes of the world. And the greatest of them all was David Livingstone.<sup>1</sup>

The son of pious and thrifty Scottish working folk, David Livingstone had devoted himself to that missionary career which thousands of British people regarded as the noblest on earth ; and he had earned the cost of his training by working at the loom. In 1840 the London Missionary Society sent him to Kuruman in Bechuanaland, the northernmost of their stations, far beyond the limits of Cape Colony. From the first he was not content to develop existing work : he was eager to carry the Christian message farther afield, and pushed forward into Northern Bechuanaland. Here he saw and suffered from the raids of the lawless Transvaal Boers : his anger flamed at their cruelties, and he longed to see them brought under effective control. He saw also the savagery and degradation of the African tribes, the endless bloodshed, the iniquities of slavery ; and he burned to bring them to an end. The first step was to open up Africa. 'Who will open up Africa?' was the burden of his early letters ; and he took the task on his own shoulders. While still stationed in Bechuanaland, he made his way to Lake Ngami (1849), and beyond it to the Zambezi River, with only such resources as could be afforded by his exiguous salary and the friendship of the natives. Then, having persuaded his paymasters to allow him to strike farther afield, and having put himself under the tutelage of the Astronomer-Royal at Cape Town so that his observations might be scientific, he struck due north to Linyanti on the upper waters of the Zambezi (1853), explored that river almost

<sup>1</sup> There is a short life of Livingstone in the 'English Men of Action' Series by Thomas Hughes.

to its source, made his way to Loanda on the Atlantic shore of Portuguese Angola, and thence, returning to the Zambezi, followed it to its mouth in the Indian Ocean (1856). With amazingly slight resources he had crossed unknown Africa from shore to shore. This journey alone would have placed him in the front rank of the world's explorers. Between 1858 and 1864 he was at work, under a commission from the British Government, exploring the Zambezi valley, its tributary the Shiré, and the noble Lake Nyasa, the southernmost of the great lakes of Eastern Africa. Finally, in 1866, he set forth upon the last and longest of his journeys, which ended only with his death in 1873. In this great journey he mapped out a great part of East Central Africa and the upper waters of the Congo.

Livingstone's wonderful career disclosed to the world immense, fertile and populous regions, and aroused the interest of all the civilised peoples. But the explorer's inspiration was not the desire for fame, or even for knowledge. He longed to bring justice and peace into the darkness of Africa; and he regarded his own work as only a preparation, and as a challenge to the civilised peoples—more especially to his own people—to take in hand this great task, which in Livingstone's view could only be carried out if civilised governments were set up in these backward lands. His adventures, his letters and his books did more than any other single cause to destroy that shrinking from the assumption of new responsibilities which had held the process of expansion in check. Soon, when the material wealth of the dark continent began to be revealed, these noble motives were to be reinforced by lower but perhaps more potent incitements; trade interests were to strengthen and overlay the appeal of philanthropy. The mad rush of the European Powers to seize territories in Africa began within ten years of Livingstone's lonely death in its remote uplands.

Contemporaneously with Livingstone's great discoveries other explorations, only less remarkable, had revealed the secrets of other sections of the African interior. Only a few of the more outstanding among many journeys can be mentioned. In 1850 Henry Barth and James Richardson made their way from Tripoli across the Sahara to Lake Chad, the upper waters of the Niger, and the mysterious city of Timbuktu. In 1854 Richard Burton and J. H. Speke explored Somaliland; and four years later they discovered the great lakes Tanganyika and Victoria. Between

1860 and 1864 Speke and J. A. Grant traced the main stream of the Nile from Lake Victoria to Khartoum, while Sir Samuel Baker found Lake Albert and explored much of the upper Nile valley. In 1873 Lieutenant Cameron, going out to seek Livingstone, struck across East Africa from Zanzibar to Lake Tanganyika, and then straight across what later became the Congo Free State to Benguela on the Atlantic shore. In 1869-74 a great German explorer, Nachtigal, mapped out much of the Sahara Desert, and made his way from Lake Chad eastwards to the Nile.

Finally, in 1874-7, H. M. Stanley, who had made his name by an earlier journey for the relief of Livingstone, made a series of discoveries which aroused greater excitement in Europe than any other explorations save Livingstone's. After a thorough exploration of Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika, he started down the great river whose upper waters Livingstone had discovered; and, following its course in the teeth of terrible obstacles, found that it led, in an immense majestic curve, right across Africa to the Atlantic. It was the mighty Congo; and the tale of its discovery, and of the wealth which its immense valley contained, set all Europe humming, and started that zealous competition to share in the wealth of unknown Africa which dominated the politics of Europe for a generation to come.

The era of indifference to colonial possessions and to the resources of the tropics was at an end; Britain was no longer to be left to exploit or neglect the outer world as she preferred; once more, as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, all the European peoples were afire to get their share of the wealth of the tropics.

[Lucas and Aitchison, *Historical Geography of the West Indies*; Lucas, *Historical Geography of West Africa*; Rogers, *Historical Geography of Australasia and the Pacific*; Brown, *Story of Africa*; Johnston, *European Colonisation of Africa*; Ellis, *History of the Gold Coast*; Wolseley, *Story of a Soldier's Life*; Blaikie, *Life of Livingstone*; Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*; *Expedition to the Zambesi*; Stanley, *How I found Livingstone*; *Through the Dark Continent*; Johnston, *Livingstone and the Exploration of Central Africa*; Cooper, *Fiji*; Supan, *Die Territoriale Entwicklung der Europäischen Colonien*]

## CHAPTER VI

### INDIA UNDER DALHOUSIE: MUTINY AND RECONSTRUCTION

(A.D. 1848-1880)

#### § 1. *The Administration of Dalhousie.*

WHILE the English-speaking members of the British Commonwealth were enjoying a period of steady and peaceful progress in material prosperity and political freedom, India was undergoing a terrible strain. She also was making progress, but it was so rapid as to be unsettling. The introduction of Western methods and ideas, begun in the previous period, was pushed forward with such devouring zeal that it led to a violent reaction. The terrible Mutiny of 1857 followed. When its turmoil had been quelled, there came an interval of twenty quiet years; but under a placid exterior the forces of change continued to work with growing potency. This was, indeed, a crucial period in the history of India. Modern India, a strange composit of East and West, was coming into being; and the ferment that began in the next period was in preparation.

From this point of view high importance belongs to the eight years of Lord Dalhousie's<sup>1</sup> Governor-Generalship, 1848-1856. Dalhousie was a man of immense ability and energy, tireless industry, inflexible will, absolute honesty of purpose, and real devotion to the public service. For sheer force of personality two only among the long line of British rulers in India, Warren Hastings and Wellesley, deserve to be compared with him. His health was frail, but his imperious will had as little pity for his own physical weakness as for the deficiencies of his subordinates. Possessed by a sense of the magnitude of the services which Britain could render to India, and intolerant of abuses and delays, he laboured with fierce zeal to accelerate the introduction of Western civilisation, and at the same time to

<sup>1</sup> There is a short life of Dalhousie by Sir W. W. Hunter in the 'Rulers of India' Series.

get rid, so far as possible, of the anomalies of dependent and often misgoverned States.

His first years were largely engrossed by the Sikh War, which ended in the conquest of the Punjab, and by the Burmese War, which ended in the annexation of Lower Burma and the completion of British control over the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. These events have been touched upon in an earlier chapter,<sup>1</sup> as the culmination of the process whereby the British *raj* gave political unity to India. Here we are concerned with the constructive labours by which these preliminaries were followed.

The conquest of the Punjab gave Dalhousie the opportunity of showing how a model province should be organised. Under the direction first of a commission of three, which included the brothers Henry and John Lawrence, and then of John Lawrence alone, he sent into the new province the picked men of the civil and military services; but his was the controlling mind in all their work. In a few years they had mastered anarchy, bridled the unruly frontier tribes with a line of forts, opened up the whole province by roads and bridges, stamped out *thagi* and gang-robbery, settled the land revenue on a basis which halved the burden of the peasantry, established impartial courts of law in every district, and so won the loyalty of the whole province that within ten years of the conquest the defeated Sikhs, who had been such formidable foes, were supplying forces to aid in crushing the Mutiny. The settlement of the Punjab—a province equal in size to one of the larger European States—was an achievement in itself sufficient to establish the fame of any statesman.

The man who could conceive and execute such a work of reconstruction was bound to regard with impatient disdain the inefficiency and the frequent tyranny which marked many of the Indian Native States. But these States were protected by treaties which guaranteed their princes against disturbance, and left them free to misgovern. The treaties could not be annulled, but in Dalhousie's view it was the duty of the supreme Power to seize every legitimate opportunity of bringing these territories under its direct control. Hindu custom permitted an adopted son, in default of direct heirs, to succeed to his adoptive father's rights. In the case of vassal princes, however, it had always been understood that the succession of an adopted son depended upon the consent of the superior Power. Dalhousie laid

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. IX. chap. xi. p. 455.

down the principle that when any such case arose in a dependent State (though not in the highest class of Native States, which were known as 'protected allies'), consent to the succession of an adopted son should be invariably refused, and the State should 'lapse' to the suzerain Power. Several cases of this kind occurred during Dalhousie's governorship, and, with the assent of the home Government, he carried out his principle rigidly. No less than seven States, with a total area of 150,000 square miles, were thus brought under direct British rule. The inevitable result was to create a feeling of alarm and insecurity among the other Native States.

Some of the States thus annexed were of importance.<sup>1</sup> The largest was Nagpur, the modern Central Provinces, which had been the greatest of the surviving Mahratta Powers. Another was Sattara, a little State held by the descendant of Sivaji, the founder of the Mahratta empire. It happened also that Baji Rao, the last of the Peshwas, who had been dethroned and pensioned in 1819,<sup>2</sup> died during Dalhousie's reign; and the Governor-General refused, very rightly, to continue the pension to Baji Rao's adopted son, the Nana Sahib, who was already a rich man. To Hindus who remembered how near the Mahrattas had come to establishing a Hindu dominion over all India, these things looked like a deliberate attempt to obliterate all that survived of the Mahratta tradition. Nana Sahib, now the chief representative of that tradition, did not forget his grievances. His opportunity for revenge came in 1857.

But the most important of Dalhousie's annexations had nothing to do with the doctrine of 'lapse.' The State of Oudh was the oldest ally of the British power. Its king was, with the exception of the Nizam of Hyderabad, the only considerable Mohammedan prince reigning in India. But his realm was, and had long been, in a state of anarchy. His *talukdars* or feudal nobles were uncontrolled; his army was mutinous; and the misery of his subjects cannot be exaggerated. Time and again Governors-General had protested, and insisted upon reform; the chaos only grew worse. At length the home Government decided that the King of Oudh must be deposed, and his State brought under direct British rule. It fell to Dalhousie to carry out this order in 1856, just before his retirement. Beyond a doubt the annexation meant an immediate and immense amelioration of the condition of the peoples of Oudh. But

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

<sup>2</sup> Above, Bk. ix. chap. iv. p. 347.

the *talukdars* were restless at the prospect of being brought under control. Other native princes were alarmed at this suppression of an allied State, which was not even justified by the doctrine of 'lapse.' And Mohammedans were disturbed by the disappearance of one of the last remaining relics of their one-time Indian supremacy. Mohammedan sentiment was further hurt when it was announced that the heir of the ancient Mogul, the nominal Emperor of India, was only to be allowed to succeed to this title if he left the ancient palace of Delhi, once the scene of the splendours of Shah Jehan and Aurangzib. All these acts were inspired by zeal for efficiency and economy, and by impatience of shams. But they aroused widespread perturbation among both Hindus and Mussulmans. They made it appear that the British power, now that it had become supreme, was setting itself to sweep away every relic of the older political systems of India.

Dalhousie's downright and practical mind made little of the irrational sentiments which were hurt by all these changes. What he cared about most was the equipment of India with the material apparatus of a modern State. To help in this work, he created a new scientific Public Works Department, and kept it busy. Magnificent roads were made, notably the Grand Trunk road from Peshawar to Calcutta. Flotillas of steamboats appeared on the rivers. New harbours were built. The Governor-General himself drew up a scheme for a well-planned railway system under State control; and before he retired he had the satisfaction of opening the first few miles of Indian railway. He began the construction of telegraph lines, and pushed it forward with such vigour that in little over two years 4000 miles of telegraph were working. A postal service at extraordinarily cheap rates was organised. The construction of great works of irrigation was undertaken, and whole areas of fertile land were made available for the production of food. The natural resources of India, its coal, its iron deposits, were explored. The scientific preservation of forests was taken in hand, and in a hundred ways efforts were made to improve the methods of Indian agriculture, to develop the cultivation of tea, of cotton, of silk and of flax, and to improve the breed of cattle, sheep and horses. Never had there been a more strenuous and systematic endeavour by a Government to stimulate the cultivation of a country's natural resources and to increase its power of producing wealth. India felt that she was being hustled out of her ancient grooves. She did not like the process.



More important than even these large contributions towards the equipment of India with the material apparatus of Western civilisation was the work which was set on foot during Dalhousie's administration in the development and expansion of education, both in English and in the vernaculars. In 1854 a despatch from Sir Charles Wood, then President of the Board of Control, laid down a scheme for the organisation of a complete educational system, elementary, secondary and university, in which private effort was to be encouraged by subsidies to come to the aid of government action. Three universities, one for each Presidency, were to crown the structure; and every province was to have a special department of government set apart for the organisation of educational work. Hitherto educational work along Western lines had been sporadic, experimental, and confined to the more advanced provinces. Henceforward it was to be systematic and general. The projected universities were not yet established when Dalhousie left India, but schemes for their organisation were under discussion.

## § 2. *Persian and Chinese Wars*

During the last years of Dalhousie's restless activity, and during the year after his retirement, Britain found herself engaged in a series of wars, which had material effects upon the situation in India, both directly and indirectly.

First came the Crimean War, which lasted for more than two years. To supply the forces needed for this struggle considerable bodies of British troops were withdrawn from India, and the proportion of British to Indian regiments was lower in 1856 than it had ever been before.

Then followed a little war with Persia, a sort of aftermath of the conflict with Russia. Persian forces were besieging Herat, in Western Afghanistan,<sup>1</sup> and Palmerston believed that Russia was behind Persia. To check this danger a combined naval and military force was sent from Bombay to the Persian Gulf. It served its end, and Persia withdrew from Afghanistan. But the forces for this expedition were drawn from the Indian cantonments; the sepoys saw the British garrison still further denuded; before the troops returned the Mutiny had begun.

Finally, a new war with China broke out early in 1857. It was an indefensible and disgraceful war, due to the arrog-

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 63, 6th Edition Plates 82 and 83.

ance of Palmerston and of the British agent at Hong-Kong. Its occasion was the arrest by Chinese officers, on a charge of piracy, of the Chinese crew on board the 'lorcha' *Arrow*, a Chinese ship improperly flying the British flag. On the pretext that the British flag had been insulted a war was begun which lasted three years; France joined her forces to those of Britain; Canton was bombarded; Western troops marched on Peking and sacked the summer-palace of the Emperor; and in the end China had to assent to the effective fulfilment of the promises she had made after the first Chinese War, and to admit Western traders and missionaries freely (1860). The Treaty of Peking is important as marking the date when the obstinate exclusiveness of China was definitely broken down. But it had its importance for India also. The spectacle of Britain forcing Western influence upon China had its significance, at a moment when India was restive under the same process. Still more significant was the fact that the rulers of India evidently had their hands full, with wars on every side.

The Chinese War had but just begun, and British troops were actually on the high seas on their way to take part in the campaign, when the Indian Mutiny broke out.

### § 3. *The Sepoy Mutiny, 1857-1858.*

Consider what must have been the state of opinion in India during 1856 and the spring of 1857, and what sort of talk must have been going on in the bazaars and in the cantonments.

Oudh had just been annexed in face of the protests of its king. It was seething with unrest. Not far away, near Cawnpore, dwelt the Nana Sahib, the disappointed heir of the deposed Peshwa. He was rich; he gave lavish entertainments to British officers and their wives; but he was a centre of underground intrigues, he could, as the representative of the Mahratta tradition, play upon Hindu sentiment, and his smooth smile covered a longing for revenge. Away at Delhi the bedraggled court of the old Mogul was humming with anger at the knowledge that it was soon to be expelled from these scenes of ancient splendour. The last days of Moslem power seemed to have come. Moslem and Hindu alike were full of resentments. Everywhere there was uneasiness, a sense that the foreign conqueror, now that he was omnipotent, was at last showing his true character and threatening all the ancient traditions

of India. A new Governor, Lord Canning, had just arrived : it was said that he brought orders to force all Hindus and Mussulmans to become Christians. Rumours flew in the bazaars, and magnified themselves. Mysterious messengers passed from village to village, leaving behind them *chapati* cakes and instructions that they should be passed on : to this day no Englishman knows what these cakes meant, but they meant something. It was nearly a century since the power of the British had been established at Plassey (1757) : would it outlast the century ? Their power rested—it had always rested—upon their army. Now they were engaged in wars on all sides, and the camps were almost emptied of white soldiers ; the sepoys, whom they had trained and armed, outnumbered them by five to one—233,000 against 45,000 in 1856. The sepoys too were beginning to be unrestful : mysterious lotus-flowers, carrying some unknown message, were passing from cantonment to cantonment.

Into the midst of all this unrest came a horrible story. A new rifle had been introduced. The cartridges used in it had to be bitten by the soldiers. And the cartridges were greased with animal fat—with pigs' fat which would defile the Mohammedan, with cows' fat which would cause the Hindu to lose caste. The worst of it was that, owing to some terrible blunder made at Woolwich, the rumour was true. Naturally the excited sepoys believed that this was a malignant design against their religion : a device to force them to be Christians. Official India was serenely unaware of all this ferment. Even a few sporadic mutinies in various regiments during the early part of 1857 did not cause serious alarm. And the sudden outbreak came like a bombshell.

On Sunday, 10th May, 1857, three native regiments at Meerut murdered their officers and marched to Delhi. The Delhi garrison, consisting wholly of sepoys, joined them ; every European who could be discovered in the city was murdered. But in the confusion two heroic deeds were done which perhaps saved the situation : a telegraph operator flashed the news along the new wires to the Punjab until he was cut down at his post ; a gallant handful of British soldiers blew up the great magazine, and died in its ruins. The mutineers burst into the Fort and proclaimed the poor old Mogul once more Emperor of India ; and the great revolt had begun.

Then came a strange pause of almost three weeks, as if the mutineers were stunned by their own success. It was

a fortunate pause for the British *raj*. It gave John Lawrence and John Nicholson, forewarned by the telegraph, time to disarm the sepoy regiments in the Punjab; and as the Sikhs remained loyal, and the Afghans failed to seize the opportunity for invasion, it became possible to organise the Punjab as a base for the reconquest of Delhi. The interval gave time also to make the situation safe in Bengal and Bihar, where only minor risings took place, and to hold on to the great fortress of Allahabad. This became the south-eastern base for the attack on the mutineers, as the Punjab was the north-western base.<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of June the Mutiny flamed out over all the wide and populous region between these two points—over all the Upper Ganges Valley, the real heart of historic India; it spread also southwards, into Bundelkhand and Central India, though here it was never so serious. In the main it was concentrated in the region now known as the United Provinces, from Delhi and Agra to Lucknow and Cawnpore. Throughout this region every outlying British officer with his family was exposed to murder; those who escaped it did so by the loyalty of their Indian servants, or the help of the peasants; and men shuddered at the thought of what had happened in a hundred lonely stations. Yet even in these regions there was no general rising. Except in the city of Delhi, and in Oudh, the mutiny was purely a military movement; and the peasants looked on at it as they had looked on at so many devastating conquests.

There were two focus-points: the one Delhi, the seat of the Mogul Empire, to which flocked the mutineers from far and wide; the other Lucknow and Cawnpore. In Cawnpore the mutineers, egged on by the Nana Sahib, laid siege to an indefensible entrenchment within which a small British force, encumbered by many women and children, strove in vain to defend itself. Cawnpore had surrendered (June 27) on a promise of honourable treatment from the Nana Sahib, its garrison had been massacred, and its 125 women and children were awaiting a still more hideous fate, before the siege of Lucknow began (July 1). There the Residency was beset by a swarming throng. Its heroic chief, Sir Henry Lawrence, was wounded on the second day of the siege, and died two days later; but the desperate defence went on.

The first and most thrilling part of the story of the

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

Mutiny filled the summer months from June to September, when the handful of British troops available in India had to fight, alongside of the loyal Sikhs and Gurkhas, through the heat of an Indian summer, against overwhelming odds, to save the existence of the *raj*, and to prevent the relapse of India into utter chaos. The mutineers had no clear plans; they made no serious attempt to combine their operations, or to extend the revolt into other parts of India. They merely awaited attack from the little British forces whom they outnumbered by five to one, and who had to advance against them, far from their bases, through more than half-hostile country. That the attacks should have been delivered at all in these circumstances was wonderful enough; that they should have succeeded seems merely miraculous.

From the Punjab, heedless of risk, Lawrence sent all the troops he could scrape together to attack the great walled city of Delhi. Through the scorching heat of June and July a little army of 5000 men hung on to the low ridge of rock that lies just outside the city of Delhi, constantly beating off fierce attacks by 30,000 foes; their long endurance has made the Ridge one of the sacred spots of the British people. In August the hero, John Nicholson,<sup>1</sup> came down with all the reinforcements that the Punjab could send, and insisted upon immediate attack. On September 14 the Kashmir Gate was blown in, the British troops stormed through the gap, and John Nicholson was shot down at their head. Six days' hard fighting gave the city to the British troops; and the Mutiny lost its chief centre. The old Mogul was taken prisoner; and when the troubles were over he was exiled to Rangoon, where he died in 1862, the last of the line of Akbar.

Meanwhile, away in the South-East, a still more desperate conflict had been going on. On July 7, Henry Havelock<sup>2</sup> had set out from Allahabad with 2000 men for the relief of Lucknow. He had to fight his way, under the sun of an Indian July, against desperate and well-armed enemies who outnumbered him by ten to one. After four pitched battles he reached Cawnpore, only to find that the day before his arrival the women and children had been slaughtered by the order of Nana Sahib, their protector. Their bodies had been flung into a well. The men who

<sup>1</sup> There is a short life of John Nicholson by Captain Trotter.

<sup>2</sup> There is a short life of Havelock in the 'English Men of Action' Series, by Archibald Forbes.

stood by that well forgot weariness, forgot mercy, forgot everything but the passion of revenge.

Lucknow was still forty miles away ; and in the Lucknow Residency the defence, maintained against terrible odds, was becoming desperate. Havelock tried to force his way through (July 25) ; but though he won three victories, his little army was so weakened by losses in action, by sunstroke, and by dysentery, that he had to fall back and await the reinforcements which were being hurried up under Outram. Then once more the advance began ; and after two more victories Havelock forced his way into Lucknow on September 25, a few days after the capture of Delhi. The fall of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow broke the back of the Mutiny—broke it before the armies which were being hurried out from Britain had time to arrive.

But there was still a great deal of heavy fighting to be done. Havelock had relieved Lucknow only to be besieged in it himself. Once more the siege had to be raised (November 16) ; and thereafter all Oudh and Rohilkhand had to be reconquered in detail. These tasks fell to Sir Colin Campbell ; and they were not completed till the fall of Bareilly in May 1858, after the mutiny had lasted a year. Meanwhile a new and serious rising had broken out in Central India, where the army of the loyal prince Sindhia revolted, occupied Gwahor, and proclaimed the Nana Sahib as Peshwa (May 1858). This would have added gravely to the danger if it had happened a year earlier. Now it came too late. Sir Hugh Rose, who had been carrying on a brilliant campaign in this region against the Mahratta leader Tantia Topi, met and crushed this fresh danger in June ; and with that victory the Mutiny may be said to have reached its end, though it smouldered for some months more in outlying districts.

#### § 4. *Consequences of the Mutiny : the End of the East India Company.*

No bald summary of events such as we have set forth in the last section can give any impression of the splendour of heroism with which the crisis of the Mutiny was met by the few thousands of British men and women in India who found themselves plunged into sudden catastrophe, and isolated among uncounted myriads of possible foes ; or of the horror, the fierce anger, the thirst for vengeance, which possessed those who had seen the mutilated bodies of Cawnpore, or

read of the long agony of Lucknow. The faithfulness of thousands of Indians, the comradeship of brave Sikhs and Gurkhas, the steady support of nearly all the ruling princes, were too readily forgotten; and if people at home and in India could have had their way, there would have been an orgy of revenge which would have left wounds that could not have been healed. Happily the reins of government were in the hands of a man who could keep his balance in a time of fierce emotion. Lord Canning made mistakes; but his steadfast moderation, for which he was at the time bitterly reproached, was not one of them, and the nickname of 'Clemency Canning,' given in scorn, has become a title of honour. Even when the very existence of the Indian Empire seemed to be at stake, Canning could realise that the outburst had not been the result of any deep-laid plan or calculated treachery, but of misunderstandings, of not unreasonable apprehensions, of sudden panic such as easily master masses of ignorant and superstitious men; and his wisdom made it possible for the wounds to heal with astonishing rapidity.

For although there had been plottings and intrigues, the Mutiny was no thought-out, organised movement. It had no real leadership. If there had been in it any strong guiding spirit, the suddenness with which it broke out, and the unpreparedness of the Government, must have ensured it at least a temporary victory. But victory could have led to no good results; it would have brought desolation to great parts of India, and at the best it could only have resulted in a renewal of the anarchy of the eighteenth century, from which India had been rescued by the rise of the British power. There could have been no cohesion between the disparate and destructive ambitions of the Mogul court on the one hand and of the Mahratta Brahmins on the other; and there was in all India no power save that of Britain which could have made itself respected, or established any semblance of order. The Mutiny was in no sense a national movement; for India, united for the first time in her history only on the eve of the outbreak, had not even begun to dream of nationhood.

But it was not all waste. It gave to many Indians a glimpse of the abyss of anarchy from which impartial government preserved them. It produced a change of temper on the part of the Government of India, a greater caution even in the pursuit of aims that were wholly inspired by a desire for the welfare of India, and a greater

tenderness for the rights of Indian States. And it led to the abolition of the East India Company, and the direct assumption of responsibility for the government of India by the Crown and Parliament of Britain—a change which had always had its advocates, since Clive wrote to urge this course upon Pitt in 1759.

By an Act of Parliament of 1858, the long, romantic history of the East India Company was brought to an end; and its powers were transferred to an additional Secretary of State, who was to act with the advice of a Council of India of fifteen members sitting in London. At the same time a Proclamation, wisely conceived and nobly written, was issued over the signature of Queen Victoria. It reassured the Indian princes, alarmed by recent annexations; proclaiming that 'We desire no extension of our present territorial possessions, . . . we shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of native princes as our own.' It promised that all religions should 'alike enjoy the equal and impartial protection of the law,' and announced the royal will that 'our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service.'

It has long been customary to say that the abolition of the East India Company marked the beginning of a new and better era in the connexion between Britain and India. But this is scarcely true. There was nothing in the Queen's proclamation that had not earlier been embodied either in legislation or in the practice of Indian government; and the Company was justified in asserting, in the dignified remonstrance with which it accepted its deposition, that it had done nothing to deserve extinction. In so far as the change made any difference, it was a difference for the worse; for the Directors of the Company had at least been a body of men with knowledge of India who had to be consulted before action was taken, while the Council of India, which was supposed to perform this function, was liable to be overridden, and has often been overridden, by Secretaries of State quite ignorant of Indian conditions. Moreover it had been a real advantage that at the renewals of the Company's charter, which took place every twenty years, there was a detailed survey of its work, followed by legislation to deal with any defects which might have been discovered. Henceforward no such regular and searching reviews took place; and the affairs of India were far less efficiently and carefully considered when Parliament was nominally responsible for them than they had been in the



days when they were in the charge of an external but dependent body, which had to submit its work to searching and detailed criticism at regular intervals.

### § 5. *The Era of Peace, 1858-1876.*

After the Mutiny came a period of eighteen years of almost unbroken peace, covering five unexciting vice-royalties.<sup>1</sup> No political events of importance broke the calm of these years; yet under this placid surface developments of profound importance were taking place.

In the first place, a substantial reconstruction of the civil and military system was quietly carried into effect. The Indian army was amalgamated with the royal army; the proportion of British to Indian troops was increased; while nearly all the artillery was made over to the charge of British troops. Again, changes were made in the structure of government. In 1861 a distinction was for the first time drawn between the executive and the legislature, and a Legislative Council, including non-official members appointed by the Viceroy, was established. This was the first tentative step towards the creation of a parliamentary system in India. The judicial system also was recast; and in the same year, 1861, the Supreme Courts and the Company's Indian Courts of Appeal were merged in new High Courts of Justice for each Presidency. Thus, after eighty years, was carried into effect the reform which Warren Hastings had striven to realise in 1780, and for which he had been impeached.

In the sphere of government, indeed, this was a time of steady, quiet efficiency. The days of romance, of great conquests and sweeping reconstructions, and of immense responsibilities and opportunities thrust by fate upon lonely men, were over. The administrative machine slowly wrought out since the time of Warren Hastings had almost attained perfection; and the District Officer, the pivot of the whole system, was carrying on his multifarious and beneficent labours in every part of India. Since 1853 new recruits to the Civil Service had been selected by competitive examination, and by the end of this period few officers survived who had been brought in by any other means. Competitive examination produced a high average level of ability, and of competence in the

<sup>1</sup> Canning, 1858-62; Elgin, 1862-3; Lawrence, 1864-9; Mayo, 1869-1872; Northbrook, 1872-6.

performance of the regular work of administration. There were no means of telling whether it could produce men of exceptional power and constructive vision such as the older system had never failed to produce. For in the post-Mutiny generation calm routine held sway, and there was no such challenge to the exceptional man as the eras of crisis had offered. Moreover circumstances were materially reducing the freedom of action and the sense of immediate responsibility which had been thrust upon local administrators. The rules of government by which officials were controlled were growing more elaborate. The railway and the telegraph brought every officer more directly under the control of the central Government; while the submarine cable, and the steamship route through the Suez Canal, were in the same way bringing the Government of India under the close control of a Secretary of State in London, who commonly knew little or nothing of India. For these reasons the system of Indian government was becoming not merely more efficient and more punctiliously exact, it was becoming gradually more mechanical, more formal, and more impersonal. There were many advantages in the increasing precision and regularity thus obtained. But the East is accustomed to personal government; it prefers to deal with a man rather than a system; and the growing formalism of the system had its dangers.

Three main features of this period of peaceful advance deserve to be noted: the emergence of the problem of famine administration, the rapid development of railways and other Western innovations, and the deeply significant expansion of Western education.

A monsoon country like India is always liable to local famines, when there is a failure of the rains in any district; and throughout Indian history famines have inevitably been of frequent occurrence. Until the modern era they were merely endured as sent by Fate. Little could be done to guard against them; for as each district only produced supplies for its local market, there was no large surplus available for transference to a famine-struck area; and there were no adequate means of transport. The development of British power during the nineteenth century affected the famine problem in two ways. On the one hand, assured peace brought a rapid increase of population, which increased the danger of famine. But on the other hand irrigation opened up new supplies; the steamship opened a world-market to the Indian cultivator, and

encouraged him to produce a surplus for export, which could be diverted to the stricken areas in time of famine ; while the railway made it possible to move these stores quickly from one region to another. All these new factors began to come actively into operation during the generation following the Mutiny ; and for this reason the problem of famine became a soluble problem, capable of being dealt with by organisation. It was in this period, during the terrible famines of 1861, 1865, and 1876, that famine organisation began to be studied, though at first with little success.

The peaceful era which followed the Mutiny was filled with constructive activity in those great works of engineering which Dalhousie had begun and the Mutiny had interrupted. This was, in particular, the Railway Age in India ; and the construction of the main trunk lines which Dalhousie had planned belongs to these years. The work was carried on by British companies, whose capital was raised in Britain. The fact that interest has to be paid on the capital thus sunk in the development of India has since been treated as a grievance by Indian critics, who regard it as a 'drain' on the wealth of India. But the increase which this work has brought about in the wealth of India enormously outweighs the charges imposed to meet it. Not only that ; railways have contributed in a very high degree to weld India into a unity.

Unity of another and a deeper kind was meanwhile being forwarded by the working out of an educational system on the lines of the Despatch of 1854. Not much, it is true, was done in the sphere of elementary education, for the Indian masses had not yet begun to want it. But there was an exceedingly rapid expansion in the provision of secondary schools, which were used by the traditional literate castes ; and by the end of the period it was already true that, in the more advanced provinces, a large proportion of these classes had some knowledge of English, and could therefore communicate with one another with an ease unknown to their fathers. Still more important was the development of the Universities. The three Presidency Universities of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were established in 1857, not as teaching bodies, but merely as institutions empowered to examine the students of affiliated colleges, and to grant degrees. Their examinations regulated and dictated the work done in colleges, some of which were provided by Government, others by the missionaries ; and at the end of the period Indians

were beginning to open colleges of their own. All the work of the colleges was carried on in the English language. All followed singularly uniform lines. And the result was that a generation of Western-educated Indians was being produced whose minds were saturated with English literature and with British political theories ; and who formed a body spread over every part of India which shared the same outlook and ideas. They were not as yet very numerous ; but their influence was altogether out of proportion to their numbers. They included all the lawyers who practised before the High Courts and the District Magistrates ; all the schoolmasters ; all the administrative officers holding subordinate Government posts in every district ; all the journalists who produced the increasing number of newspapers in English and the vernaculars. The creation of this powerful and vocal class, whose members, in every part of India, shared the same body of ideas, and could communicate with one another, was a fact of portentous political importance. It was the biggest thing that had happened in the history of modern India.

But the significance of these things was as yet scarcely perceived. The railway, the one-anna post, the newspaper, the school, the university, the wide diffusion of English—these things were creating in divided India new elements of unity. It was as yet only a superficial unity, based upon the assimilation of some of the methods and some of the ideas of the West ; it did not seriously qualify the divisions of race, language, caste and religion by which India was more deeply sundered than any other country on the face of the globe. Nevertheless it was a portentous though an unappreciated fact ; and it has dominated the subsequent history of India.

#### § 6. *The Imperial Title and the Second Afghan War.*

The prosaic period which we have been surveying was brought to an end when Disraeli assumed control of the home Government (1874), and sent out to India Lord Lytton, a man of his own temper, with a high sense of British greatness, and a taste for the dramatic and the grandiose.

Disraeli had resolved to express the assumption of supreme power in India by the introduction of a new royal title. The title Empress of India, *Kaisar-i-Hind*, which he devised (1876), was the object of a good deal of satirical criticism. But Disraeli's judgment was right. He had the imagination to see that the suzerainty of the British Crown over the

princes of India was made much more natural and acceptable if the homage demanded from them was rendered to the Empress of India than if it was rendered to the Queen of a distant and alien land; and it may be added that the assumption of this title was the first step towards an acceptance of the view that India ought to be regarded not as a mere subject dominion of the British State, but as a partner realm. Lytton's first task as Viceroy was to arrange a stately and ceremonious Durbar at which to announce to the assembled princes the assumption of the new title, and to receive their homage (January 1877). It was an assemblage such as Akbar or Aurangzib might have held; for the first time the British *raj* assumed the robes of ceremony, and put aside the businesslike drabness of a mercantile concern.

Alongside of these splendours, the Viceroy had to deal with the problem of finding modes of relief for the gravest of a series of famines which afflicted India during this period (1876-1878). It is his highest claim to respect that he showed greater insight and courage in dealing with famine than any of his predecessors. He was the first responsible statesman to grasp the problem of Indian famine as a whole, and to realise that the difficulties could not be dealt with from hand to mouth as they arose, but that an enlightened Government must realise their inevitable recurrence and be prepared with a policy for dealing with them. It was a Commission appointed by Lytton which first seriously dealt with the famine question as a whole, analysed the ways in which famines should be dealt with in various provinces according to their circumstances, and laid down the principles upon which the famine policy of the next period was wrought out.

But what most markedly distinguished the viceroyalty of Lord Lytton was the revival of the Afghan question, and the outbreak of the second Afghan War. Since the disasters of the first Afghan War,<sup>1</sup> the Government of India had been chary of any interference with the prickly mountaineers. During the lifetime of Dost Mohammed, the Amir whom Lord Auckland had tried to overthrow in 1839, relations of distant friendliness were maintained, and the Amir had kept back his fighting men when the troubles of the Mutiny might have tempted them to invade India. But Dost Mohammed died in 1863, and there was a period of civil war in Afghanistan before his son Sher Ali secured the throne (1868). During these years Russia was steadily extending her power

<sup>1</sup> Above, Bk. ix. chap. xi. p. 453

in Central Asia. In 1868 she established her control over the Khanate of Bokhara, which brought her to the very borders of Afghanistan; and the Khanate of Khiva, farther west, was soon to follow (1873).<sup>1</sup> The Amir saw himself being crushed between the two European Powers. He asked for a promise of British protection (1869 and 1873); it was refused him, because Britain was resolved to advance no farther. Thereupon he turned to Russia; and by 1876 it appeared that the holder of the gates of India was definitely hostile to the British power. What action should that Power take? On this question there were two sharply-opposed bodies of opinion, the one urging a forward policy, the other urging restraint. But these were years in which the old British fear of Russia had been brought once more, to fever-heat by events in Europe. Disraeli was struggling against the extension of Russian power in the Balkans; the extension of Russian influence over Afghanistan seemed still more dangerous.

In 1876, to guard against these dangers, Lytton declared a protectorate over the barren land of Baluchistan,<sup>2</sup> which lies to the south of Afghanistan. He took control of the Bolan Pass, and established an advanced military station at Quetta, from which it would be easy, if need be, to take Afghanistan on the flank. Quetta is still one of the pivotal points of Indian frontier-defence. In 1878 the Amir of Afghanistan, after receiving a Russian envoy with great honour, refused to admit a British envoy to his dominions. 1878 was the year when anti-Russian feeling in Britain was at its height. The consequence was a declaration of war against Afghanistan.

The war began with a brilliant threefold advance on Kabul, which drove the Amir to flight, and forced his successor to accept the British terms. The frontier was revised so as to secure to India the control of the passes. Afghanistan practically became a vassal State, precluded from following an independent foreign policy; and a British Resident took up his abode at Kabul. But as in 1840, so in 1879, initial success was only the herald of fresh trouble. The British Resident was murdered; the Amir had to flee to the British camp; and the war had to be fought all over again. The Afghans offered a vigorous resistance; General Roberts, after occupying Kabul afresh, had to fall back for a time; a detached British force in the west was seriously defeated at Maiwand and penned into

<sup>1</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 63, 6th Edition Plates 78 and 79.

<sup>2</sup> See the map, Atlas, 5th Edition Plate 62, 6th Edition Plate 80.

Kandahar ; and in order to relieve it, Roberts had to make the great march of 300 miles from Kabul to Kandahar through a hostile and difficult country, which established his military reputation (1880). Evidently adventures amongst the fierce clansmen of the mountains were costly and dangerous ; and in the end Lytton's forward policy was reversed by the Gladstone ministry of 1880, the British forces were withdrawn, and the Amir Abdurrahman was left to establish his authority by iron methods over his unruly subjects, under a guarantee of his frontiers against foreign attack. Abdurrahman was a very vigorous barbarian ; he would be no dependent vassal ; he meant to hold his own independently between the two European Powers, and in a remarkable degree he succeeded in doing so.

In effect the Afghans were henceforward left to themselves. But the second Afghan War had one important result ; it gave to India control over the mountain wall which formed her defence on the north-west ; the keys were no longer in untrustworthy hands ; and Quetta had been established as a military outpost to guard the frontier line.

One further feature marked the Viceroyalty of Lord Lytton ; a feature ominous of the future. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877-8) a part of the vernacular press in India began to denounce the Government with virulence, to extol Russia, and to preach the necessity of overthrowing the British *raj*. To curb this license, a Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878, which empowered Government to exact bonds of security from the publishers of vernacular newspapers. The Act aroused an angry outcry among the new educated classes of India, as a restraint upon the freedom of the press, and it was withdrawn four years later. But the significant thing was the emergence of the new temper which showed itself both in the kind of writing against which the Act was directed, and in the protest against the Act itself. A new era was plainly dawning in India, in which submission to authority was no longer to be the dominant note of its thought, as it had been for untold centuries. The ferment of the West was working.

[Lee Warner, *Dalhousie* ; Rice Holmes, *History of the Indian Mutiny* ; Marshman, *Havelock* ; Cunningham, *Lord Canning* ; Trevelyan, *Cawnpore* ; Edwardes, *Life of Sir H. Lawrence* ; Bosworth Smith, *Life of Lord Lawrence* ; Kaye and Malleon, *History of the Mutiny* ; Ilbert, *Government of India* ; Dutt, *India in the Victorian Age* ; Trotter, *History of India under Queen Victoria* ; Roberts, *Forty-One Years in India* ; Adye, *Indian Frontier Policy* ; Lady B. Balfour, *History of Lytton's Indian Administration*.]

## CHAPTER VII

### THE AGE OF SCIENCE

#### § 1. *The Literary Protest against Self-Complacency.*

THE word 'Mid-Victorian' carries an aroma of smug and self-complacent conventionality, of contentment with low ideals, and of unaspiring morality; and we have seen that there is much in the character of the period which is in accord with this suggestion. But the literature of the period assuredly does not reflect this character; perhaps because the vital literature of any age is never a mere echo of its ruling temper, but is rather inspired by the new ideals that are just beginning to sprout through the soil, and that are to become the inspiration of a later time.

The dominant literary figures of the period were the great five who survived from the previous period, and made it appear that there was scarcely any change in the main current of thought. Tennyson (Laureate since 1850) and Browning were both at the height of their fame and of their powers throughout this period and far into the next; the later work of Thackeray, who died in 1863, and of Dickens, who died in 1870, both fell into the Mid-Victorian time; and Carlyle, though he had produced all his best work, and was wasting his years on a gigantic monument to *Frederick the Great*, was still regarded as the greatest of prophets. But the literary character of the time was fixed by a group of younger writers whose work mainly or wholly belonged to it: Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, William Morris, George Meredith, Dante and Christina Rossetti among the poets; George Eliot, George Meredith, Mrs. Gaskell, and Anthony Trollope among the novelists; John Stuart Mill, Matthew Arnold, Sir Henry Maine, Huxley, Bagehot, and T. H. Green among the essayists and reflective writers. And to these may be added the second Ruskin; for the Ruskin who was primarily a student and critic of the arts completed his main work with the publication of *The Stones of Venice* in 1851, and was succeeded by a different Ruskin, the preacher of a new economic gospel.



Now it cannot be said of any of these (except perhaps of Trollope) that they were the exponents of a conventional morality, or that the self-complacency of the age is echoed in their pages. Rather they expressed a many-sided revolt against conventionality, and were agog to stab complacency into wakefulness and self-reproach. They denounced with Ruskin the arid ugliness and cruelty of an industrialised society; or with Morris took refuge in imagining simpler and happier societies in the past or the future; or with Swinburne hymned the praises of sensuous beauty; or with Matthew Arnold grew melancholy and caustic at the spectacle of the Philistine's insensitiveness to sweetness and light; or with Meredith satirised the unrealities of sentimentalism and demanded a bracing contact with the clean and stern earth; or with Christina Rossetti found content in a quietism that shut out the world. Not one of them exulted in the happiness of his own time; they were all preachers of one form or another of revolt or retreat or discontent; and to them at least, whatever the average mind of the time may have thought, there seemed little ground for satisfaction either with the facts or with the aims of their own time. The most vital creative minds of the mid-Victorian era were not content with life as it was; they were reaching forward towards some other and happier mode of life; and in the midst of the self-complacency of their age were preparing the way for the active, restless, unhappy time that was to follow.

It has been observed that a change seemed to come over the temper of English thought and writing of the imaginative kind somewhere about the middle of the 'sixties; after about 1865 there was less creative work of the highest quality, and what there was took on a more sombre tone. 1865 was the year of the death of Palmerston, which brought to a close the era of satisfied quiescence in politics; 1866 was the year in which the armed, alert, remorseless figure of Prussia strode clanking to the foremost place among the Powers of Europe, and 'blood and iron,' backed by science, were declared the master-forces of the world; 1867 was the year in which the veiled figure of Demos took command in Britain, against a background of Fenian outrages and Sheffield rattennings. No doubt these things, and the vague emotions they inspired, counted for a good deal.

But there was something else which counted for more. By 1865 the significance of Darwin's *Origin of Species*,

published in 1859, had been driven by clamorous controversy into the imagination even of unscientific men. Man, it seemed, was not a unique creature, but only the last link in a long chain of evolution. Thereafter the aspect of the world seemed changed, and the poet and the thinker had to revise their outlook. The old certainties were undermined; the new dogmas seemed chill and forbidding. *Man's Place in Nature* (Huxley published his brilliant book on this subject in 1863) appeared to be no longer that of a triumphant master, but of a helpless creature in the grip of blind forces which he might modify, but which he could not control. Science, a harsh governess, had taken mankind into her school; and Science is not only destructive of self-complacency, it seemed that she insisted upon the revision of all sorts of comfortable presuppositions.

### § 2. *The Conquests of Science.*

It was in the 'sixties, then, that average men of intelligence (whose normal education as yet included no element of natural science) were forced by the strident controversy about Darwinism to realise that the patient investigations of the men of science were changing the whole aspect of the universe, and transforming accepted values. While on the one hand they were conferring on man new powers over Nature, on the other hand they were dethroning him from his high place as Nature's lord, and teaching him that his highest achievements had neither finality nor permanent validity, but were only a stage in an indefinite process whose laws might be discoverable, but whose goal could not be perceived. The Darwinian controversy aroused an intensity of interest such as no purely scientific discussion had ever before aroused; even Disraeli took a hand in it, declaring to a delighted body of clergy at Oxford that if the question was whether man came from the apes or from the angels, he was 'on the side of the angels.' But the question was too deep to be settled by ministerial witticisms or episcopal denunciations. The self-complacent generation was brought face to face with a total recast of some of its most fundamental conceptions.

For it was not only Darwin, or his theory of natural selection, that was in question. Darwin's work was only one aspect of an immense process of scientific exploration which had been carried out during the previous half-century; in that half-century greater additions had been made to

man's knowledge of the world in which he lives than in all the earlier centuries of the Christian era. This work, which had been carried on by a multitude of investigators in all countries, had as yet left the ordinary thought of the age comparatively untouched; and, although the British Association had been at work for a generation, it was in the mid-century that the significance of the new knowledge began to be realised, thanks to the stimulus of the Darwinian controversy, and the work of a group of great expositors, notably Huxley, Tyndall and Herbert Spencer.

It would be beyond our function or power to give an adequate account of the amazing new revelation of the world which scientific investigation had gradually displayed during the first half of the nineteenth century. But some attempt must be made to indicate the stages by which these inquiries had ceased to be the concern only of philosophers, and had, in Bacon's phrase, 'come home to men's business and bosoms.'

During most of the eighteenth century scientific inquiry had been largely devoted to working out the implications of Newton's doctrines, and to investigating the mechanics of the solar system. But mathematical physics is a subject too abstruse to be intelligible to ordinary thought. In the later eighteenth century Hutton had laid the foundations of scientific geology by insisting that the formation of the strata of the earth-crust must be traced to known and demonstrable forces; while Cavendish, Priestley and Lavoisier had made the first serious researches into the chemical composition of matter. But these inquiries, pregnant as they were with consequences for humanity, had made little impact upon the general thought of the time; nor did they seem to have any practical consequences of importance.

With the nineteenth century began an extraordinary series of investigations, progressively more fruitful, which touched 'men's business' through their practical consequences, and 'men's bosoms' through their revolutionary effect upon thought. There were two main parallel lines of inquiry, always closely related with one another; the one, research into the composition and constitution of matter and the forces at work in the physical universe; the other, research into the history and circumstances of organic life upon the earth-crust.

Dalton's atomic theory (1804) supplied the doctrine of chemical composition which illuminated the whole process of chemical analysis and synthesis, the relation of all forms

of matter to their constituent elements; and the work of Humphry Davy had brought home to the public imagination some sense of the significance of these inquiries. Already during the Mid-Victorian age some impressive demonstrations had been given of the new power which this kind of knowledge gave to man: Liebig's analysis of the fertilising factors in soils, and Perkin's discovery of coal-tar dyes, may be taken as obvious illustrations. By the middle of the century chemical science had long ceased to be a subject of mere theoretic interest; it had become the means of turning the gifts of Nature to the service of man in innumerable ways.

Again, in the sphere of physics, the study of the forces at work in nature, an immense revelation had been made. The study of light, and its analysis by the spectrum, were among the great achievements of the period: and the dullest of minds could appreciate one consequence of these studies in the invention of photography. Alongside of this went the study of heat as a form of energy. Joule demonstrated between 1840 and 1850 the principle of the Conservation of Energy, showing that the amount of heat producible by a given amount of energy is invariable; and on this basis Thomson (afterwards Lord Kelvin), Helmholtz and others worked out the principles of Thermodynamics, placed the hitherto empirical art of engineering upon a scientific basis, and made possible its immense later progress.

Meanwhile the phenomena of electro-magnetism had been investigated by Faraday and a host of other scholars. Already some of the practical results of these were apparent: the telegraph had been invented in 1837, uncounted thousands of miles of wire had been erected in all parts of the world, and by 1866 the submarine cable had united the two shores of the Atlantic and was annihilating distance. A new era in industrial invention had opened. The inventions of the eighteenth century had been empirical; even the locomotive engine had been the result merely of ingenuity, not of the deliberate working out of demonstrated principles. Now Science was telling man just where and how to look for the power he wished to control. Man was learning that he lived in a Universe governed by fixed laws which could be discovered and turned to account; forethought and exact knowledge were increasingly being required from him in place of rule-of-thumb, if he were to hold his own. The progressive realisation of these facts came very poignantly 'home to man's business.'

But he had to learn also that he was a part of Nature, governed by those same laws which he was learning to study and utilise. This teaching 'came home to his bosom' with unpleasant force, and what especially brought it home were the investigations of the geologists and the biologists. Geology came to maturity as a science with the publication of Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, 1830-1833. Lyell showed that the laws by which the Earth had been shaped were the same laws which were still at work; that the strata of the earth-crust could be arranged in a sequence of time, which ran back immeasurably behind the accepted date for the creation of the Earth; and that the sequence of strata showed also a sequence of life-forms, in which Man took his place as 'part of the fauna of the earth-crust.' Darwin's infinitely patient and cautious inquiries were the natural outcome of this line of thought. What he strove to disclose was the process of development, under natural laws, whereby various forms of organic life had been gradually differentiated; and Man had to take his place as a product of that process, the descendant and the kin of the beasts that perish. The Darwinian theory has been exposed to an infinity of criticism better-founded than the easy epigrams of Disraeli; but the demonstration that Man is a creature of the same evolutionary process which had produced all the other forms of life was the essence of his doctrine, and the source of all the outcry; and this, so far as Man's physical frame is concerned, remains unchallengeably true. There was yet another sphere of biological investigation in which an advance of momentous importance was made during this period. In 1855 Louis Pasteur had begun to disclose the enormous importance of the part played by micro-organisms in determining the conditions of life, and in particular in producing diseases and showing the way to combat them. A whole new sphere, whose very existence was unsuspected, but whose vital significance became more obvious the more it was studied, was thus thrown open to investigation; and no series of discoveries has been more fruitful of results, whether to medicine or to commerce. Already Lister had been enabled, by the use of this knowledge, to inaugurate a new era in surgery.

But Pasteur's epoch-marking work was for a long time little regarded. It was the Darwinian controversy which compelled men to realise what the discoveries of Science implied, and what a new view of the world and of life they were disclosing. It is no wonder that there was

perturbation and excitement when all the accepted orthodoxies, the taken-for-granted schemes of the universe, with which men had rested content, were thus challenged. Science seemed to be setting forth a new and bleak creed : a fatalist view of the world, as governed by rigid, invariable, non-moral laws, which could be studied and used, but never deflected ; a horribly materialist view, which left no place for the working of the Spirit ; for even the workings of the mind and soul of Man were traced, by some enthusiasts, to the operation of physical factors. In the first enthusiasm of this revelation, its limitations and imperfections were not yet perceived ; and in the main it led, on the one hand to angry and ineffective denunciation, on the other to the setting up of a new Scientific Orthodoxy, whose priests were apt to be as pedantic and intolerant as any other priesthood. It produced, also, a new philosophy ; and in a long series of lucid, bloodless, doctrinaire volumes, the first of which appeared in 1855, Herbert Spencer set himself to define the philosophy of the scientific era, and to account for all organic development, and all the achievements of the mind of Man, on mechanical principles, as ' a change from a state of homogeneity to a state of heterogeneity.' Almost before his gigantic work was completed, the narrow dogmas on which it rested had been rejected as insufficient by the movement of enlightened thought ; for as scientific exploration penetrated more deeply, the mysteries by which it was faced were found to be more impenetrable ; and the truly scientific mind revolted against confident dogmatism about ultimate principles. But for a generation the mechanical view of the Universe, which seemed to be the outcome of the first two generations of scientific exploration, wielded a great influence over men's minds

### § 3. *The Scientific Spirit in the Study of Man.*

The method of exact and patient inquiry and collection of facts which had produced such remarkable results in physical and biological science were now being applied also to the study of Man and his civilisation. Anthropology, the link between biology and history, which deals with primitive Man, his types and his social organisation, began as an organised science in the middle of the nineteenth century ; archæology, which investigates Man's buried relics, and strives to reconstruct the forgotten civilisations of which these are often the only memorials, made amazing

advances ; scientific philology, which studies languages and their relations, received a new birth, especially owing to the labours of a group of great German scholars ; the study of comparative law, and the investigation of its sources in ancient and primitive custom, cast a flood of light upon the background of history, and the work of scholars like Sir Henry Maine brought out the shallowness and unreality of doctrinaire theories about society. These studies were of especial value at a time when Europe, and especially Britain, were being brought into intimate contact with the backward races. They were converging lines of inquiry ; and they went to show that human society, like everything else in the world, is subject to an unending evolutionary change ; that it is impossible to define any scheme of social organisation as inherently right and universally valid ; and that no system of government can work unless it is in accord with the stage of social development which the people subject to it have attained. The sciences of human society seemed to declare against all cut-and-dried formulæ for the organisation of social well-being.

History, too, underwent a great change under the influence of the prevailing spirit. Here, as in philology, the lead was taken by the Germans, amongst whom a remarkable group of scholars, led by Ranke and Mommsen, inaugurated a new scientific method, based upon the exhaustive analysis and criticism of all the available original documents, a re-examination of all traditional judgments, and a resolute determination to avoid preconceptions. History was no longer to be written merely as an interesting story, or as a means of buttressing a particular school of thought ; it was to be severely objective. In Britain, Macaulay had written in the spirit of a Whig pamphleteer, Carlyle in the temper of a preacher. Froude, the greatest master of pure narrative in history whom Britain has yet produced, was of the new school in so much as he devoted infinite pains to the collection of material ; but he wrote as a furious partisan, and as the advocate of a political theory. His great book—great in spite of its defects—belongs to these years, and it may be said to mark the transition from the old mode of treatment to the new. Meanwhile the State had undertaken the systematic publication both of the surviving chronicles and written narratives of early British history, and of a selection from the archives and official documents which have been preserved in Britain

in greater abundance than in any other country. The work of editing these materials trained a new school of historical investigators. The most remarkable product of these methods was Stubbs's *History of the English Constitution*, which showed the English system of government as the outcome of a process of gradual evolution; and Stubbs became the acknowledged master of a school of writers who aimed beyond all things at regarding the course of history scientifically and objectively.

#### § 4. *Britain's Educational Deficiencies.*

The new scientific revelation was the outcome of an unorganised co-operation among all the civilised peoples; its results were the common heritage of civilisation, the greatest and noblest proof of the growing unity of the world. But British scholars had taken their full share, and in most fields far more than their share, in the combined effort. Among the greatest names, a disproportionately large number were British during the first half of the century.

This was all very well. But in the coming time the fortunes of nations would depend not solely upon the rare supreme men of great original genius, but upon an army of men able to apply and to extend the results of the great discoveries. It fell to each nation to devise for itself the means of training such an army, and thereby utilising the new knowledge. Under the new conditions an efficient national system of education had become more vitally important than it had ever been in the past. The triumph of science and the triumph of democracy had come about almost at the same moment, and both demanded for their service an educated nation; both threatened disaster to the nation which was not educated.

In this respect Britain was undeniably behind other great nations. She was far behind Germany, who had long since provided herself with an organised national system; she was behind America; in many vital respects she was behind France. For England possessed, as yet, no organised system of education. Scotland, indeed, had such a system, with her four universities, her numerous Academies or secondary schools, and her parish schools whose promising boys went on in large numbers through the higher stages; though even Scotland was slow to adapt herself to the new knowledge. In England there



were multitudes of schools, but no system. There were elementary schools, and elementary education was soon to be made universal and compulsory. There were great public schools, with a fine tradition, the training-ground of the governing class ; but they clung to the educational methods which had descended from the Renaissance, and would have nothing to do with the new knowledge. There were many old grammar schools, dependent upon mediæval benefactions ; in 1864 a Royal Commission investigated their condition, and drew generous plans whereby they might be made the basis of a national system of secondary education ; but England was not yet ripe for such a step, and all that was done (1869) was to empower an Endowed Schools Commission to revise the trusts of these schools—a useful step, so far as it went ; but not a step towards the creation of an organised system. In any case there was no sort of relation between the elementary and the secondary schools. Again, there were many Mechanics' Institutes and evening schools of science, where young men picked up some training after working hours. They were helped by grants from a Department of Science and Art which had been set up at South Kensington in 1853. In effect these classes represented the only means of obtaining acquaintance with the new learning which was open to the vast majority of the nation ; and they were singularly ineffective means.

But the greatest of English educational deficiencies was the lack of university training, especially in the new scientific learning. And this was serious—more serious even than the shortcomings of the schools ; for it is in the adolescent stage that serious scientific training is most effective, and if the army of trained men whom the needs of the future would demand were not produced by the universities, they would not be produced at all. Oxford and Cambridge maintained all their old prestige, and in many respects deserved it ; but they clung to the old ways and were contemptuous of the new learning. The University of London was merely an examining body ; and the colleges which prepared candidates for its examinations were too poorly endowed to do the true work of a university, though some of them contained great teachers. Durham, founded in 1837 from the surplus revenues of the richest of English sees, was devoted almost exclusively to the training of clergymen. This was the equipment with which England was content ; while Germany had sixteen universities supported by the State,

in which both the old knowledge and the new were generously treated; and in America lavishly endowed universities were arising in every State. There was only one modest sign, during this period, of any awakening to a sense of the importance of this need: in 1851 a Manchester merchant left his fortune to found a modest centre of learning in his native city. But that was only a beginning, and a very inadequate one. Blinded by self-complacency, the British people entered upon the new era unequipped in an essential respect.

[Gregory, *Discovery*; Gooch, *Annals of Politics and Culture*; Buckley, *Short History of Science*; Lubbock, *Fifty Years of Science*; Traill, *Social England*; Darwin, *Life of Darwin*; Huxley, *Life of Huxley*; Saintsbury, *English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*.]

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE ZENITH OF BRITISH INDUSTRIAL SUPREMACY

#### § 1. *The Factors in British Trade Supremacy.*

THE foundation of the self-complacency which we have noted as a feature of British life in this period was the fact that Britain's industrial supremacy seemed to be so overwhelming as to be impregnable. It was only in the last decade of the period that this belief began to be qualified by misgivings.

There were many reasons for this overwhelming supremacy. To begin with, Britain had obtained a generation's start over all her rivals in the use of the mechanical methods of production, which her sons had invented. When the continental peoples began to address themselves to the organisation of modern industrial methods, their achievements were at first on a very modest scale; they had to buy their machinery mainly from Britain, and in a large degree to borrow British experts and workmen to set it going. Except in Belgium, which was the first European country to be industrialised, it was not until the 'forties that mechanical production began to establish itself, and not until the 'fifties and 'sixties that it played a large part in the life of France and Germany. Moreover the great new inventions still came mainly from Britain. For example, the Bessemer process of making steel from non-phosphoric iron was introduced in 1856. This process immensely cheapened steel-production, led to the substitution of steel for iron for a multitude of purposes, and greatly strengthened British supremacy in the whole group of trades that depend upon iron and steel.

In the next place, Britain had obtained an almost equally clear lead over her rivals in the development of railways; and the creation of an efficient railway system is an almost more important stage in the economic organisation of a country than the introduction of mechanical methods of

production. The main features of the British system were already clearly marked out by 1850. At that date, though Belgium had made a good start, France and Germany were still laying out their trunk lines; the other European countries had scarcely begun the work; while in America the task was so gigantic in scale that it necessarily took a long time. During the thirty years following 1850 railway construction was going on at a furious pace all over the world. But the fact that Britain was so far ahead of all competitors in this field not only gave an advantage to her industries, it opened to her a new field of highly profitable activity. She became in a large degree the railway constructor for the world. Her factories produced a large proportion of the needful rails, locomotives and rolling-stock; her contractors undertook (especially in the less developed countries) a large part of the work of construction; her investors supplied a large proportion of the needful capital. In railway construction, as in the provision of machinery, she was playing a great part in introducing to the rest of the world the industrial system which had first grown up within her own borders. This was a very profitable undertaking. What was more, it strengthened her hold over the world's commerce; for she received, in the form of imports, an annually growing interest on the capital she laid out; she was becoming the supreme creditor-power of the world.

Again, no country had begun to rival the British production of coal, the very foundation of modern industry; though here also Belgium was (in proportion to her size) in advance of every other European country. France had a very poor supply, and, such as it was, she had not yet learnt to make the most of it. The immense coal deposits of America were only beginning to be developed; the rich deposits of Germany, which are far greater than those of England, were but gradually being opened up. Though Germany made great progress in this field between 1850 and 1870, her production in 1871 was less than 34,000,000 tons, while France and Belgium produced 13,000,000 apiece. The British production in that year was over 110,000,000—almost double the combined production of the three chief coal-producing countries of Europe. Cheap and abundant coal gave an immeasurable advantage to British manufacturers. It gave an equally marked advantage to shipping, now that steam was taking the place of sails.

The ascendancy of British shipping formed yet another contributory factor, and one of the most important. Down to the time of the Civil War, the United States had been a serious rival. The American mercantile marine (on the open seas) was then the second in the world, counting in 1850  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million tons against the British  $3\frac{1}{4}$  million, while France came next with less than 700,000 tons. Twenty years later the British tonnage had risen to over  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million tons; the American tonnage was practically stationary, the French tonnage had risen till it was nearly on a level with the American, and the Germans were not far behind. In the next decade the advance of British shipping was still more remarkable. It rose to  $7\frac{1}{4}$  million tons, while America and France declined, and Germany made a modest increase. This means that it was in this period that Britain made her supremacy in shipping absolute and apparently unassailable: she owned nearly half of the shipping on all the seas of the world. There were two main reasons for this triumph. One was the substitution of iron and steel for wooden ships, and of steam for sails. Britain had been handicapped in the construction of wooden ships by the fact that she had to import most of the timber she used; whereas she had every advantage in the construction of steel ships, and an abundant supply of the best steam coal. The other reason was that, since she had adopted Free Trade, the merchandise of all the world poured into her open harbours; she had become the central *entrepôt* as well as the central workshop of the world. Moreover she did most of the world's carrying trade; her ten thousand ships were to be seen on every sea and in every port. For these services she was paid by a tribute of goods from every land; and the growing excess of her imports over her exports represented in part the price of these services, and in part the interest on the immense capital she had invested abroad, both in her own dominions and in foreign lands.

But none of these achievements would have been possible if Britain had not been of all countries the most active in the creation of capital; if her people had not consistently set aside a large proportion of the wealth they created for use in the creation of fresh wealth. The habit of saving and investment was almost universal in the middle and upper grades of her society; and with the growth of prosperity, and the development of Savings Banks, Friendly Societies, Trade Unions, and Co-operative Societies, it was growing also among her labouring classes. Two

things especially facilitated the process. The first was the growth of the Limited Liability Company, which offered an immense range of opportunity to the investor. The second was the development of the banking system, which was steadily increasing its range; all the well-to-do sections of the community had fully acquired the habit of depositing their earnings with the banks, which could thus use, for advances to industry, the whole of the floating wealth of the country. There were occasional financial crises, notably in 1857 and 1866, which were due to over-speculation; but these crises, though they caused momentary alarm, did not undermine confidence in the system, or impair its stability. Moreover, owing to the world-wide commercial connexions of Britain, owing to the fact that her open ports were the standard markets of the world, and owing to her secure reputation for solidity and good faith, London had become the financial capital of the world; and bills on London had become a universally accepted part of the mechanism of world-commerce. This was not only in itself a source of profit; it gave strength and prestige to the British trader wherever he went.

Even the political events of the period helped to make British industrial and financial supremacy more secure. The principal nations of Europe, and the United States of America, were using up much of their available capital for warlike purposes. This retarded their industrial development, and stimulated an increased demand for many British products, notably steel and warlike munitions. Because of the political troubles of her destined rivals, Britain was thus enabled, for the best part of a generation, to maintain her lonely supremacy, and to conceal from herself the fact that she could not hope permanently to preserve this supremacy over peoples who commanded natural resources quite as great as her own.

### § 2. *The Changing Structure of Industry.*

Meanwhile the structure of economic society in Britain had been undergoing a gradual and almost imperceptible process of change. What is called the 'capitalist' system was being gradually modified. 'Capitalism' means, if it means anything, a system wherein industry is carried on under the complete control, and in the sole interest, of

the owners of the capital invested in it. In that sense, the term truly describes the system which had existed in Britain during the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth, when all important industrial concerns were in the hands of individual *entrepreneurs* or small groups of active partners, who provided the necessary capital, risked all they possessed in their undertakings, hired labour at the lowest rate at which they could get it, managed their factories as they thought fit, and took all the profits. In the mid-century this system was changing in many ways.

To begin with, the Limited Liability system had brought into being an immense class of purveyors of capital whose risks were limited, and who took no direct share in the management of the concern, though they exercised a certain control, rather theoretical than practical, over the actual directors. A distinction was emerging between the investor and the director, between Capital and Management; and capital, and the share of control which it exercised, were coming to be distributed over a very wide range. In a strict sense, the capitalist class now included not a few hundreds or thousands, but possibly millions of citizens, drawn from all classes; while the director class was no longer limited to those who owned the bulk, or even any very large proportion, of the capital employed. This was a change of profound social significance.

In the second place, neither the shareholders nor the directors were now permitted an exclusive and unrestricted control over the conditions under which industry was conducted. On the one hand, the State had asserted its right to intervene, and had, in a long series of Factory Acts, defined hours of labour, regulated the conditions of work, and appointed a body of Inspectors who, in effect, shared in the control of industry in these regards. On the other hand the powerful amalgamated Trade Unions which grew up during this period were asserting with some success a claim to be consulted in the determination of wage-rates and other conditions; they were establishing a sort of divided control over industry which was to become more effective during the next era. Thus several distinct factors were claiming a share in the control of industry—the directive class, the shareholder class, organised labour, and the State. Insensibly economic society was gradually moving away from the régime of pure capitalist domina-

tion, though the trend of this development was scarcely yet perceived.

Finally new forms of industrial organisation, definitely non-capitalist in character, were struggling into existence. Consumers' control was being organised in the Distributive Co-operative Societies after the pattern of the Rochdale Pioneers; Public Trusts, not working for a profit, were beginning to appear in such an instance as the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, established in 1857; communal enterprises were being undertaken both by the State (which took over the telegraphs in 1870) and by the more progressive municipalities, which had substituted municipal organisation for private companies in the supply of water and in some cases of gas. These developments had not yet gone very far; but they had already gone far enough to make it no longer true that British industry was conducted under a purely capitalist system. Already it was marked by a considerable variety of method and experiment.

During the years when these changes were beginning to be apparent, a German exile, Karl Marx, was working out, in the British Museum, his theory of economic society: the first volume of *Das Kapital* (the only one ever completed by its author) was published in 1867. Marx's theories led him to certain conclusions which bore very directly upon the facts we have just noted. He asserted, first, that there must be a progressive concentration of capital in a diminishing number of hands, and, secondly, that this process must be accompanied by increasing misery, poverty, and degradation among a propertyless proletariat. Both conclusions were flagrantly in conflict with the actual facts as they were unfolding themselves before Marx's eyes. The creation and ownership of capital were being more and more widely diffused; a good deal of it, in Co-operative Societies, in Trade-Union investments, and in private savings, was held by the 'proletariat' itself; and, far from becoming more degraded and more miserable, the proletariat was steadily becoming more prosperous. The average rate of 'real' wages (*i.e.* wages measured by their purchasing power) rose about 20 per cent. in Britain between 1850 and 1870, while the hours of work were being reduced, the conditions of labour were being ameliorated, and the health and amenity of the towns in which the 'proletariat' lived were being steadily improved. Marx's practical conclusion was that there must be an inevitable



conflict between Capital, developing as he imagined it, and the Proletariat, also developing as he imagined it; and this became the creed of revolutionary Socialists in all countries. But the development in both cases was actually following the opposite direction to that which Marx insisted it must follow: capital was becoming more diffused instead of more concentrated, and the control of its owners over industry was becoming less instead of more absolute; while the 'proletariat' was claiming a share of control, was itself, in modest ways, accumulating capital, and was thus becoming less 'proletarian.' It is not surprising, therefore, that the British labour movement paid, during this period, no attention to Marx and his doctrines. Powerful and wealthy bodies like the Amalgamated Society of Engineers were, half-blindly, pursuing rather the aim of a sort of partnership in the regulation of industry than that of a violent overthrow of the economic order for the purpose of substituting the dictatorship of one class for that of another.

### § 3. *Foreshadowings of a New Era.*

During the 'seventies it began to be evident that the era of unchallenged British ascendancy in industry and commerce was drawing to a close. The wars of nationality in Europe were almost over, and the nations were settling down to make up for lost time. Germany, in particular, exultant in the pride of her new greatness, and masterfully guided by Bismarck and the able Prussian bureaucracy, was setting herself to repeat in the economic sphere the triumphs she had already won in the sphere of war and politics. The rocketlike rise of German trade, which was to be the most impressive feature of the next generation, was beginning: we shall have to touch upon it in a later chapter. America also was obviously becoming a serious competitor. She had overcome the troubles of the Civil War; she had digested and organised her vast domain, and equipped it with modern communications; and she was about to enter upon the systematic development of her immeasurable resources, helped by the inventive fertility of her citizens.

Faced by such rivals, Britain would have to encounter henceforth a fierce competition for the trade of the world such as she had not known before. Already its effects were beginning to be perceptible. The later 'seventies were a period of trade-depression, and a whole generation was to

pass ere the figures for export trade of the early 'seventies were exceeded. A new era was opening, in the economic as in the political sphere ; but its significance was not yet fully realised.

The outstanding feature of the new era was to be the growing economic interdependence of the whole world ; during the next generation the world was to be turned into a single economic unit, and prices everywhere were to be regulated no longer by local conditions but by the world-market. Britain, because she was the first of the modern nations to be industrialised, had been the first to recognise and accept this fact of economic interdependence. She could not feed her people from her own resources ; she drew the main materials for her industry from abroad ; her very existence depended upon foreign trade. And, ultimately, this had been the foundation of the Cobdenite doctrine, and the justification of unqualified freedom of trade ; Britain had been compelled by the force of events, first among all the nations, to abandon the old ideal of economic self-sufficiency.

Her dependence upon foreign trade became more marked during the 'seventies ; because the development of the virgin corn-lands of the American West, and the improvement of ocean-transport, brought to her markets vast supplies of American food, which reduced the cost of living for her urban population, but inflicted a very severe blow upon her agriculture. Despite the gloomy prognostications of the agricultural interest in 1846, English farming had been prosperous during the thirty years following the repeal of the Corn Laws—more prosperous than in the preceding generation. But the flooding of the market with cheap American grain in the 'seventies brought a great change. All but the best corn-land was increasingly put out of cultivation and devoted to pasture ; and the proportion of her indispensable food-supplies which Britain had to draw from abroad grew very rapidly. More patently than ever, the existence of the British nation depended upon foreign trade ; and this fact became the key-note of all British policy.

Other nations were slow to follow in her steps. They regarded with dread the possibility that their national existence might come to be at the mercy of other peoples ; and with one accord they set themselves to avoid this danger, and pursued with desperation the old ideal of national self-sufficiency. This was the accepted doctrine of France, of

Germany, of almost every European country ; and it led them to adopt a policy of strict protection. Even America adopted the same view, and, in spite of her inexhaustible natural resources, adopted a tariff policy of strict protection, with the idea of ensuring the upgrowth within her own borders of every necessary industry. Even the British colonies increasingly followed the same course ; and during the next generation Britain was to find herself left almost alone in the policy of free imports, and in the frank abandonment of the ideal of national self-sufficiency which this policy implied.

But it was impossible for any nation, once it had entered upon the path of industrialism, to avoid dependence upon foreign trade. However obstinate the national spirit might be, it was forced to recognise that an industrial community is necessarily dependent upon the outer world, and that to such a community foreign trade is not a mere inessential though desirable adjunct to the national well-being, but a necessary foundation of it. Thus the growth of industrialism, and of the enormous system of commercial interchange which it involved, was forcing upon the whole civilised world a realisation of the interdependence of all its members. And not only were the civilised communities dependent upon one another ; they were all, as men were slowly beginning to realise, dependent upon the supplies of raw materials which came from the tropical lands, while these lands in turn were dependent upon the industrial peoples for the material apparatus of civilisation without which progress was impossible for them. Here again, because she was the first industrialised nation, Britain had been the first to realise these facts, however dimly ; and she alone, as we have seen, had shown any considerable activity in the development of tropical trade. But in this, as in other respects, the era of unquestioned British supremacy was drawing to a close. Soon there was to begin an eager competition for a share in tropical trade ; and as the greater nations still clung to the ideal of national self-sufficiency, it became their object to obtain not merely a share in trade, but political control over the lands with which this trade was conducted. The result was the rush for colonial possessions which marked the next period.

Already in the 'seventies there were foreshadowings of what was to come : foreshadowings of the coming competition between industrial rivals for the trade of the world ; foreshadowings also of the coming colonial rivalry. And

one result was a gradual change in the character and direction of British policy, some signs of which we shall see in the next chapter.

[Marshall, *Industry and Trade*; Clapham, *Economic Development of France and Germany*; Bagehot, *Lombard Street*; Hobson, *Evolution of Modern Capitalism*; Levi, *British Commerce*; Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*]

## CHAPTER IX

### GLADSTONE AND DISRAELI

(A.D. 1868-1880)

#### § I. *The Rival Leaders: Gladstone's First Ministry*

THERE are few greater paradoxes in political history than the passage of the Reform Act of 1867, which enthroned democracy in Britain, and opened a new era in her political development. For this momentous 'leap in the dark' was not the result of any vehement agitation; it was taken by a Parliament elected to support Palmerston, who hated the very idea of large political changes, and it was taken under a Conservative ministry which only held power because the Liberal majority had been broken by a far more modest proposal of reform in the previous year.

What made this bundle of paradoxes possible was the fact that British politics had come under the domination of two powerful personalities, who, though they were as sharply contrasted as any pair of political opponents who have ever faced one another, and though their political ideals differed as widely as their characters, were nevertheless both men of immense courage, and adventurous even to recklessness. Disraeli was the most daring of political calculators; and, hating the prosaic middle class, he calculated that democracy would accept the leadership of an aristocracy, and respond more readily than the middle class to an imaginative conception of national policy. Gladstone, when he had once adopted a belief, scarcely calculated at all. He was never half-hearted; and he had now become, in the political sphere at any rate, a convinced Liberal. These two men shared the responsibility for the Act of 1867 in the form which it finally assumed, because, for different reasons, neither feared democracy. Henceforward their personalities dominated the political scene, and gave to its controversies a new vitality. It has been said that they reintroduced into British politics two potent appeals, the one the appeal of Righteousness, the other the appeal of Romance. The

antithesis is perhaps too epigrammatic; but at least it is true that, while these two great men held the stage, politics could never be mean, and could never be dull.

They assumed the leadership of their respective parties almost at the same moment. In 1868 Lord Derby resigned the office of Prime Minister and was succeeded by Disraeli, whilst Lord Russell, the Liberal leader, had recently announced his withdrawal from public life, and left the succession to Gladstone. The gage of battle was flung down almost immediately after the passage of the Reform Act, when Gladstone introduced a series of resolutions declaring for the disestablishment of the Irish Church. The grievances of Ireland, so long neglected, had taken possession of his mind, to discover remedies for them had become his main political aim, and on this aim he was able to reunite the Liberals, to defeat his great rival, and to force a dissolution of Parliament. The new democratic electorate was called upon to choose between the rival leaders. Their choice went for Gladstone, who returned to Westminster with a majority of 120.

Gladstone's ministry of 1868 has been described as the first Liberal administration, because it was the first which was not dominated by the Whig love of compromise. And assuredly there was nothing compromising or half-hearted about the work which it undertook. It introduced such sweeping changes, and raised such fierce controversies, that within five years it had worn out its strength, and its leader, in spite of all his eloquence, earnestness, and vitality, seemed to be a spent force. Gladstone had the defects of his qualities, and the intensity which was his greatest strength was incompatible with some of the most useful gifts of a party chief. He was apt to be wholly engrossed by some cause to which his heart was given, and for that reason, in keeping a finger upon the pulse of his followers, and in judging how the fickle gusts of public opinion veered and changed, he was far inferior to his rival.

It was Ireland which now engrossed his mind. He had resolved to remove the causes of Irish unrest. Three main factors seemed to him to lie at the root of the Irish problem, and he tried to deal with each of them in turn. The first was religious inequality, the privileged position of the Anglican Church, which counted among its adherents less than one-eighth of the population, seemed the sign and token of racial ascendancy. The second was economic

distress ; and the root of this lay in the land system. The third was academic intolerance, which excluded Irish Catholics from the privileges and rewards of the highest education.

In 1869 the Irish Church was disestablished, and deprived of all endowments earlier in date than 1660—thus losing nearly half of its total income of £16,000,000. The withdrawn revenues were set apart for the relief of exceptional distress in Ireland. This measure aroused more passionate controversy than any bill introduced into Parliament since 1846. Most Anglicans regarded it as sheer sacrilege and spoliation, and never forgave its author. But there are few to-day who would not acknowledge that the disestablishment of the Irish Church was a wise act of statesmanship.

In 1870 Gladstone turned to the Irish land problem, and in dealing with it made a bold departure from the principles of *laissez faire*. Adopting as his foundation the tenant-right custom of Ulster, he enacted that no tenant should be evicted so long as he paid his rent, and that he should be entitled, on leaving his holding, to full compensation for all improvements he had made. Arbitrary evictions, and the confiscation by the landlord of improvements made by the tenant, had been the worst iniquities of the Irish land-system. But the Act of 1870 was an insufficient remedy. So fierce was the competition for land in Ireland that rents were universally excessive, and multitudes of tenants were in arrears. The Act gave no protection against eviction in such cases ; and therefore largely failed of its purpose. Gladstone's third Irish Bill, to deal with the problems of university education, was an ill-designed measure, which pleased nobody and had to be withdrawn.

In these three measures Gladstone had made the boldest attempt which had yet been undertaken to remove the causes of Irish unrest. So eager was he to create an atmosphere of peace that he released all the imprisoned Fenians. But neither this nor his three bills brought content to Ireland. The released prisoners returned to America to plan further conspiracies. Ireland was neither pacified nor grateful. Agrarian outrage continued, and even increased : it was worse in 1870 and 1871 than at any time since 1853. A Peace Preservation Act had to be passed alongside of the Land Act in 1870 ; and in 1871 a band of Irish-Americans, known as Ribbonmen, created

such a reign of terror in Westmeath that a special Act had to be hurried through Parliament empowering the Lord-Lieutenant to commit suspected persons without trial. The Irish problem was no nearer solution; and Disraeli was able to taunt his rival with being driven to resort to repressive laws after having 'legalised confiscation, consecrated sacrilege, and condoned high treason.'

While Gladstone's attention was mainly concentrated upon the Irish question, his colleagues were engaged upon a large programme of legislative and administrative reforms in other spheres: the five years from 1868 compare, indeed, in the range and importance of their legislative output, not unfavourably with the years following 1832.

First place belongs to the Education Act of 1870, which laid the foundations of a national system of elementary education in England. In spite of the activities of voluntary schools and the increased subsidies from the State (which now paid one-third of the cost of recognised and inspected schools) less than half of the children of school age were attending school at all, and little more than one-quarter of them were attending efficient and inspected schools. But the problem of filling this large gap could not be raised without stirring up the acrimonies of religious controversy. Many Churchmen held that education was<sup>1</sup> exclusively a function of the Churches, and should be left to them, with aid from, but without control by, the State. Political Nonconformists, on the other hand, urged that public money should not be used for denominational teaching, and demanded a national system, which should be universal, compulsory, and non-sectarian. This view was vigorously advocated by the Birmingham Education League, under the leadership of Joseph Chamberlain, a very able and uncompromising young Radical, who now began to play an important part in national politics. To steer an even course between these opposing views was no easy task. W. E. Forster, the minister to whom the task was assigned, held that his first duty was to set up good schools everywhere, and to get the children into them. His Act established School Boards, elected by the ratepayers, in every part of the country where the existing provision was inadequate, empowered them to levy rates, and imposed upon them the duty of providing facilities for every child. He did not propose to disregard the voluntary schools; on the contrary, he increased their grants. The School Boards were merely to fill gaps; and it was at first proposed



that even they should be left free in the matter of religious instruction. This aroused a storm which was only partially allayed by the introduction of a provision that religious instruction in Board Schools should be undenominational. In this form the Act passed. But it was assailed by vehement criticism from Churchmen on the one side, and from Nonconformists on the other; and though it was a contribution of the highest value to the welfare of the nation, it seriously weakened the Government which was responsible for it.

An equally thorny task was undertaken by Edward Cardwell, Secretary for War, in the reconstruction of the British military system. Cardwell was, in fact, the creator of the modern British army; he was the first administrator to tackle in a scientific way the peculiar military problem of Britain, which is different from that of any other State, since Britain must be ready at all times to send an efficient force to any part of the globe for the defence of her widely scattered dominions, and therefore needs a highly-trained professional army capable of easy expansion in case of need. Cardwell substituted a system of short service with the colours, followed by a period in the reserve, for the older long-service system. He organised the army on a territorial basis, allotting a recruiting area to each regular regiment, and linking both the militia and the volunteers of each area with the regulars. He introduced the system of linked battalions, one serving abroad while the other remained at home. And finally, in 1871, he abolished the hoary abuse (dating from the Restoration) whereby commissions in the army were purchasable, and were thus in effect limited to the wealthy classes. All these reforms (whose value has been proved by time) were vehemently opposed. But it was the abolition of purchase which aroused the greatest storm, because it was an attack upon one of the last preserves of aristocratic privilege. To avoid defeat in the House of Lords, purchase (having been originally established by Royal Warrant) was abolished by the same means. This was denounced as unconstitutional; and the Cardwell reforms added to the rising tide of protest against the restless activity of the Liberal ministry.

Other important changes were the abolition of religious tests at the Universities, except for theological chairs (1871); the adoption of competitive examination for appointments to all Government offices save the Foreign Office (1870), which completed the reform begun by the establishment of

the Civil Service Commission in 1855; the creation of a new department of government, the Local Government Board (1871), which was made responsible for poor law and public health work, and in general for most of those functions in which the national Government found itself brought into contact with local authorities; and the introduction of vote by ballot (1872), long since demanded by the Chartists. Even the dusty purlieus of the law were invaded by the ruthless Liberal broom; and the Lord Chancellor, Lord Selborne, carried out a far reaching reconstruction of the complex traditional system of justice, unifying all the overlapping courts into a single High Court with separate branches for different kinds of work. This great achievement was not completed until after the ministry had fallen; but it formed an essential part, and not the least valuable part, of its notable record of work.

Finally there were two important measures which bore upon the problems of social reform. By the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 the grievances of the Trade Unions were largely remedied. They were recognised as legal bodies, and enabled to protect themselves against misconduct by their own officers. But the Act also tried to define 'picketing,' and to distinguish between lawful and unlawful modes of persuading men to abstain from working. These clauses were interpreted by some of the judges in such a way as to make the organisation of a strike almost impossible; and the Trade Unions were angered and alienated. A Licensing Bill, introduced in 1871, won for the Government still greater unpopularity. Its aim was to reduce the excessive number of public-houses, and this ensured for it the furious opposition of brewers and publicans: every public-house in the country became a centre of anti-government propaganda. But the temperance enthusiasts denounced the bill with equal fervour, because it allowed ten years' grace to the publicans in lieu of compensation, and fixed a number of houses in proportion to population below which reduction should not go. Attacked (like the Education Act) from both sides, the bill had to be withdrawn.

## § 2. Foreign and Imperial Policy.

The strenuous legislative activity of the five years from 1868 necessarily brought a reaction. Disraeli was no doubt using the picturesque language of political invective when he described his opponents (1874) as having 'harassed every

trade, worried every profession, and assailed or menaced every class, institution, and species of property in the country; but undoubtedly many classes and interests were made restive and uneasy by this multifarious activity. By 1873, and still more by 1874, the Liberals were exhausted and divided, and Gladstone's personal prestige had fallen to a low ebb.

But what contributed still more to the discredit of the Liberal Government was the widespread feeling, which Disraeli did his best to encourage, that Britain's prestige in the counsels of Europe was being impaired by their foreign policy. And it is true that the high-spirited and somewhat dictatorial tone to which Palmerston had accustomed the British people was no longer heard. There were, indeed, only four points at which the foreign policy of the Government seemed to have importance. When the Franco-Prussian War broke out (1870), Britain preserved careful neutrality, though each side charged her with showing favour to the other. But there was one possibility which aroused alarm: the neutrality of Belgium might be threatened by one side or the other. Regarding the obligations of the treaty of 1839 as of vital importance, Gladstone and his foreign minister, Lord Granville, negotiated identical treaties with France and Germany, whereby Britain pledged herself in the event of a violation of Belgium by one party, to join the other in remedying the wrong. Unquestionably this contributed to preserve Belgian neutrality inviolate. Again, it was this Government which, after long negotiations, concluded the treaty of arbitration with America on the *Alabama* question, and paid the compensation awarded by the arbitrators. In the eyes of many, including Disraeli, this involved a lowering of the national honour. To this Government also fell the task of dealing with Russia's repudiation (1870) of the provision of the Treaty of Paris, by which she had been forbidden to maintain a fleet in the Black Sea.<sup>1</sup> As France was out of action, and Austria and Prussia were prepared to accept Russia's demand, all that could be done was to protest, and to insist that the cancellation of a treaty must be carried out by an agreement of all the Powers, not by the action of a single party. The satisfaction thus obtained (at the Conference of London, 1871) was formal rather than real; but, short of a war with Russia, nothing else could be done, and Disraeli himself, who spoke of Britain's honour as being impaired,

<sup>1</sup> See above, Chap. i. p. 477.

would scarcely have gone to war on such an issue. Finally, the Government had to deal with the advance of Russia in Central Asia, which in 1869 reached the frontiers of Afghanistan. Afghanistan asked for British protection, which was refused, because it would have entailed indefinite obligations; but negotiations were opened with Russia, wherein both Powers undertook to respect the independence of Afghanistan. On all these points it cannot be said that the foreign policy of the period presented much ground for attack: it was *pacific and unexciting*. The real ground of complaint lay in the fact that Britain was not playing the leading part in European affairs which Palmerston had accustomed her to play, and which Disraeli, with his love of the dramatic, longed to resume.

But there was another field in which Disraeli's criticism was more valid. Gladstonian Liberalism took little interest in colonial problems, and had no definite imperial policy; it was content to leave the colonies to go their own way. As we have seen, there were no exciting events or great questions of principle in any of the colonies during these years; the establishment of responsible government in Cape Colony (1872) and the transference of the Great West to Canada (1868) were perhaps the only colonial decisions of moment which the Government was called upon to make. But in many small ways its negative attitude was made plain; notably in its persistent refusal to accept new responsibilities in the Pacific or in Africa. Hence Disraeli was able to appeal to, and to stimulate, the pride of empire which was beginning to come to birth in Britain. Long before, in 1866, he had spoken of Britain as having 'outgrown the European continent,' as 'the metropolis of a great maritime empire extending to the bounds of the farthest ocean,' and as being 'more of an Asiatic than a European power.' Now, in 1874, when Gladstone's ministry was about to fall, Disraeli emerged as the champion of the imperial idea. 'Self-government in distant colonies,' he proclaimed, 'when it was conceded, ought to have been conceded as part of a great policy of imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied by an imperial tariff . . . and by a military code. . . . It ought further to have been accompanied by the institution of some representative council in the metropolis which would have brought the colonies into constant and intimate relations with the home government.'

Towards these large aims Disraeli was not, in fact, to

take any definite steps during his own ministry, which was now about to commence. But at least he had raised the standard of an ideal different from that of his great rival. In place of a policy of political reconstruction, he offered a programme of foreign prestige and imperial consolidation. He offered also, in vague terms, a policy of social reform—‘the amelioration of the condition of our people’. It was thus a sharp and clear-cut antithesis which was set before the British electorate when the Gladstone ministry fell in the beginning of 1874, and Demos was called upon for the second time to give his judgment between the rival claimants for his confidence.

### § 3 *Disraeli in Power Social Reform and the Imperial Spirit*

In the light of later events, the most instructive feature of the Parliament of 1874 was that it showed portents of coming change. For the first time two working men—both miners—were returned to Westminster, the advance guard of a future Labour party. They acted with the Liberals, but their appearance was a sign that it was not only on paper that democracy had been established. For the first time, also, a solid body of Irish members, fifty-eight in number, refused to be labelled as members of either of the recognised parties, but took their stand as Home Rulers. Their declared aim was to break up the Parliament of which they were members by establishing Irish autonomy, and to that end all other considerations were to be subordinated. At first, however, the full significance of this event was obscured by the fact that Isaac Butt, the leader of the Home Rulers, was a moderate man, not prepared to go to extremes. But behind Butt sat a new member, a Protestant landlord, Charles Stewart Parnell, a man of one idea, reserved, silent, inflexible and unafraid, who was soon to apply new methods of ventilating the Irish problem which all but brought down the parliamentary system in ruins.

As yet, however, Parnell was watching and waiting, mastering the rules of parliamentary procedure, and the Home Rulers gave as little trouble as the Labour members. In the eyes of contemporaries the outstanding feature of the new Parliament was that it had a clear Conservative majority of fifty, the first clear Conservative majority since 1846—perhaps we should even say (since Sir Robert Peel had been in all essentials a Liberal) the first clear Con-

servative majority since 1832. The long Liberal ascendancy had come to an end; the Liberal party was divided and disheartened, and its great chief had announced his retirement from parliamentary life. Disraeli, enjoying real power for the first time in his long career, had his chance of showing what were his conceptions of government, and what was the meaning of the Tory Democracy which he had long preached.

Three main aims guided Disraeli's policy. The first was the aim of raising British prestige in the eyes of the world by means of a 'spirited foreign policy.' The second was the stimulation of the pride of empire among the British people. The third was the substitution of social reform for political reconstruction. It was not until the later years of his government, from 1876 to 1880, that the revival of the Eastern question gave an opportunity for a 'spirited foreign policy' like that which Palmerston had pursued. But it was in his first two years that the imperialist spirit of which he was the mouthpiece, and the ideas as to social reform which he had long expounded in general terms, got their clearest expression.

The development of the social policy of Tory Democracy was entrusted, in the main, to the Home Secretary, Richard Cross, a Lancashire man of real ability and wide sympathies. He did not share the current suspicion of Trade Unions; and in the Employers and Workmen Act of 1875 he gave them the charter of freedom which made possible the rapid expansion of their power during the next period. This Act swept away once and for all the possibility of hampering Trade Union action by prosecutions for conspiracy, by providing that in any trade dispute no action taken by two or more persons could be treated as a conspiracy unless it would have been a crime if taken by an individual. It was with the Act of 1875 that the experimental period of Trade Unionism came to an end, and that these powerful organisations were assured of their place as one of the most potent factors in national life.

Cross was also responsible for the first serious attempt to deal with the housing problem. His Workmen's Dwellings Act (1875) enabled the Council of any town of more than 25,000 inhabitants to acquire insanitary areas by compulsory purchase, and if need be to throw upon the rates the cost of demolishing and reconstructing slum dwellings. This was not the beginning of communal activity in housing reform, for some of the more progressive

municipalities, such as Liverpool, had already undertaken such work under powers obtained by private Acts. But it was the first national recognition of the importance of the problem. Again, Cross carried out two valuable and important measures of codification. In the Public Health Act he gathered together, clarified and expanded all the piecemeal legislation which had been passed since Edwin Chadwick began Public Health work in the 'forties. And, with the aid of a Commission appointed in 1876, he simplified and codified the multifarious and divergent factory legislation of the previous forty-five years, in the Factories and Workshops Acts of 1878. One further enactment of this group must not be omitted, though the credit for it belongs mainly to a private member. While the workpeople in factories were being safeguarded, no thought had been given to the conditions under which sailors pursued their perilous calling in British ships: they were permitted to be sent to sea in unseaworthy or overloaded vessels by employers whose own interests were safeguarded by insurance. Samuel Plimsoll made the remedying of this injustice his life-work; and in 1875, by means of a disorderly outbreak in Parliament which did him nothing but honour, he forced Government to pass a Merchant Shipping Act, which was made permanent in 1876.

Of the imperial spirit which Disraeli expounded and stimulated we have already seen illustrations in earlier chapters. His colonial secretary, Lord Carnarvon, strove to bring about the federation of South Africa,<sup>1</sup> and was also responsible for the first establishment of British power in the Pacific by the annexation of Fiji and the appointment of a High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. But it was India which made the strongest appeal to Disraeli's romantic imagination. He sent the Prince of Wales on tour through India (1875), thus making the British monarchy a living reality to the princes and the peoples of that vast land; he invented the sonorous title of Empress of India, and ordained that all the princes should be assembled in a great Durbar to render homage; he sent out Lord Lytton, a romantic poet, to break away from the prosaic calm of the régime of Lawrence and Northbrook, and to initiate the aggressive frontier policy which led to the second Afghan War.<sup>2</sup> Interest in India was also the inspiring motive of the most dramatic and successful of Disraeli's *romans*, when in November 1875 he seized upon a transient chance and

<sup>1</sup> See above, Chap. iv. p. 529.

<sup>2</sup> See above, Chap. vi. p. 360.

purchased from the bankrupt Khedive of Egypt his holding of nearly half of the shares in the Suez Canal Company for £5,000,000. It turned out to be a very profitable commercial speculation. And, what was more important, it brought Britain for the first time into direct contact with the affairs of Egypt, where she was to play so important a part.

#### § 4 *Spirited Foreign Policy a Conflict of Ideals*

The last four years of the government of Disraeli (who became Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876) were filled with wars and rumours of war—the new crisis in the Balkans,<sup>1</sup> and all the excitements that followed from it, until it was settled (for the time being) at the Congress of Berlin (1878), the outbreak of the second Afghan War<sup>2</sup> (1878), which was still raging when the Beaconsfield ministry came to an end in 1880, the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877,<sup>3</sup> and the outbreak of the Zulu War in 1879. Once more Britain found herself in the grip of great and exciting events, popular passion and national pride were aroused to fever-heat, and Beaconsfield, becoming for a season one of the outstanding figures not merely of British but of European politics, showed that he was the true heir of the tradition of Palmerston—of the Palmerston who feared and hated Russia, and who, inspired by that motive, drew Britain into the mountains of Afghanistan to resist the Russian peril there, and into the Crimea to defend the integrity of the Turkish Empire. For Beaconsfield as for Palmerston, the checking of Russia and the maintenance of the Turkish Empire formed a vital British interest, 'a righteous cause,' which would justify, if need were even the sacrifice and waste of war. In adopting this attitude, Beaconsfield was undoubtedly following a long established tradition of British foreign policy. He succeeded in avoiding war in Europe, though only by a hair's-breadth, and at Berlin he scored a real diplomatic triumph. But for his intervention, the Turkish dominions in Europe would have been reduced within the narrowest limits—almost the whole of the Christian populations of the Balkans would have been emancipated from the Turkish yoke a generation before they actually achieved their liberty, and perhaps the incessant unrest and intrigue which made the Balkan Peninsula the danger-point of Europe throughout that generation might have been avoided. Whether this triumph brought

<sup>1</sup> Above, p. 485.

<sup>2</sup> Above p. 561.

<sup>3</sup> Above, p. 530.



any advantage to civilisation or to Britain is a question upon which opinions may differ. Lord Salisbury, who was Beaconsfield's colleague at Berlin, long afterwards confessed that 'we put our money on the wrong horse.'

But for British politics the interest of this crisis was that the traditional policy of defending Turkey was no longer accepted without challenge. Gladstone, who had seemed to be an extinct volcano, was drawn from his retirement. In a fiery pamphlet and a series of impassioned speeches he denounced the unspeakable Turk, pleaded that Britain should once more stand forth as the defender of oppressed peoples, and demanded the expulsion of the Turk, 'bag and baggage,' from the provinces which he had misgoverned and oppressed. This breach with a long tradition of policy at first embarrassed Gladstone's political colleagues, for very few among the leading members of his late ministry shared his views on this issue. He had to fight, moreover, against a strong current of popular opinion and an all but unanimous press. But, disregarding all these considerations, he carried on his impassioned campaign with superb and vehement eloquence, until (helped by the normal 'swing of the pendulum') he had converted a majority of the electorate, for a time at any rate, to his point of view. The Liberal victory of 1880 was essentially the result of this campaign, in the course of which two sharply contrasted views of national policy were set before the British people.

The conflict began in 1876, when the revolt of Bosnia was followed by a Serbian and Montenegrin war against Turkey, by an outbreak of anarchy among the Turks themselves, and by the atrocious savagery with which a Bulgarian rising was suppressed. The Powers—responsible for Turkey under the treaty of 1856—spoke of joint action. Beaconsfield stipulated that there must be no interference by force, since this would impair Turkish sovereignty; and, perhaps encouraged by the British attitude, the Sultan would do nothing except under duress. Gladstone insisted that the Powers ought to take joint action, by force if need be, since the first duty of civilisation was to put an end to iniquitous oppression, and to help subject peoples struggling for freedom. Then came the intervention of Russia (1877). Beaconsfield dreaded the expansion of Russian power; Gladstone regarded Russia, in this instance, as the minister of justice. Russia defeated Turkey and imposed upon her the Treaty of San Stefano. Beaconsfield insisted that, for the Treaty of 1856, any treaty affecting the integrity

of Turkey must be considered by the Powers in Congress, and that, in any case, the Russian terms reduced Turkey to a dangerous condition of impotence. War nearly resulted: Beaconsfield hurried troops to the Mediterranean, and made a secret treaty with Turkey whereby Cyprus was handed over to Britain (under tribute) in return for a promise to defend Asia Minor. In the end Lord Salisbury and the Russian ambassador came to a secret agreement as to the readjustment of the San Stefano treaty, and the Congress of Berlin was summoned to endorse the arrangement (1878). Gladstone maintained that the San Stefano terms were just, that war on such an issue would be a crime, and that if the Powers were guardians of the integrity of Turkey, the cession of Cyprus and the secret agreement with Russia were breaches of this obligation every whit as serious as the San Stefano treaty; and he denounced the Berlin compromise as a shameful handing back of misgoverned provinces to a tyrant Power.

Never was there a more violent conflict of judgment, or a debate on national policy which disclosed deeper differences of principle. And this debate was conducted, not behind closed doors, but on public platforms, in speeches that were reported in every newspaper. The British people were called upon to give their verdict upon the most fundamental principles of national policy. Their verdict wavered. It went for Beaconsfield in 1878; it went for Gladstone in 1880, but not for very long.

Beaconsfield's was the judgment of *Realpolitik*. He cared little for the fate of the semi-barbarous peoples of the Balkans, so long as the security and the honour of Britain were maintained unimpaired; and he held that, in the conflict and rivalry of the Powers, Britain's security would be imperilled if Russia were aggrandised or the Turkish barrier weakened; Britain's honour tarnished if she failed to uphold her undertakings to maintain the integrity of the Turkish Empire. Gladstone's was the judgment of abstract morality, for which many hold that there is no place in international relations. In one of his Midlothian orations he laid down what he held to be the sound principles of foreign policy. They were, that the supreme national interest was not glory or prestige but peace; that for this end the best ultimate means must be the cordial co-operation of all the Powers of Europe; that entangling engagements and obligations, such as Britain had undertaken in regard to Turkey, should be

avoided; that all nations should be regarded as having equal rights, none, not even Britain, being entitled to claim a pre-eminent right to be consulted; and that the policy of Britain should always be inspired by a love of freedom and a sympathy with the oppressed. These principles are far removed from the calculations of *Realpolitik*; in some respects they are, no doubt, counsels of perfection. The judgment of events would seem to have decided that on the Turkish problem, at any rate, Gladstone was right, and Beaconsfield wrong. But on the deeper conflict of ideals which underlay this great debate, it cannot be said that history has yet given its decisive verdict. In the vexed and troublous generation of international rivalry which opened on the morrow of this long discussion, not Britain alone, but all the world, were to be called upon to shape their course by one or the other of these sets of ideals.

[Morley, *Life of Gladstone*; Monypenny and Buckle, *Life of Disraeli*; Cecil, *Life of Salisbury*; Trevelyan, *Life of Bright*; Lang, *Life of Iddesleigh*; Low and Sanders, *History of England, 1837-1900*; Walpole, *History of Twenty-Five Years*, Paul, *History of Modern England*, Webb, *History of Trade Unionism*, Marriott, *The Eastern Question*]

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